The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Challenges of Globalisation, Human Capital Investment and Economic Reform:

A Critical Evaluation of the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme

This thesis is submitted to the University of East Anglia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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Declaration

I, _____ confirm that the work presented in this research has been performed and interpreted solely by myself except where explicitly identified to the contrary. I confirm that this work is submitted for the degree MPhil/Ph.D. and has not been submitted elsewhere in any other form for the fulfilment of any other degree or qualification. Sources and quotations are properly acknowledged.

Signature: _____

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Abstract

Globalisation has developed alongside the growth of information technologies. These have in turn required states to pursue policies promoting adaptation to a knowledge-based economy reliant on 'human capital' (a phrase first coined in 1961 by Theodore Schultz).

This thesis explores and assesses one aspect of the Saudi Arabian government's response to this globalisation process: investment in human capital and development of the population's workplace skills requirements through the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP). The study considers how countries such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) are looking to maintain their competitive position in the global economic sphere and to increase understanding of the fact that future economic and productivity gains will be dependent on individuals developing their skills, knowledge and specific workplace competencies. The people of a country are themselves potentially valuable assets to be nurtured and utilised. Against this background, the thesis seeks to investigate the effectiveness of the KASP in achieving human capital development and fulfilling policy goals. These strategic objectives are related to the growth and development of the human capital in the country and diversification of the economy.

The thesis has three main sections. The first sets out the overarching research question and the research questions and begins to engage directly with the themes identified in the literature review, including definition, measuring human capital and how to engage with the literature. The overarching research question for the thesis is, 'How has the Government of KSA sought to invest in human

capital through the KASP, and to what extent has the programme been successful?' The second phase sets out the research methodology. Data was collected using a triangulation method, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The third phase analyses the data and the findings of the study. Here, it is argued that KSA has encountered numerous challenges because of over-dependence on oil to run the economy. In addition, rapid growth in the population has exerted additional pressure on the country, especially regarding women's issues of equality and rights, since women make up half of the population. In the midst of these major economic challenges, the primary task undertaken by the government of KSA has been to invest in human capital development to generate employment opportunities for the growth and diversification of the economy.

In this thesis, I attempt to explore, through KASP, the extent to which the initiatives taken by the government of the KSA to improve human capital have been effective or not. This thesis is in alignment with the "Vision 2030" of the country that was announced by Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on the 25th of April 2016. The Vision 2030 reform plan is a package of economic and social policies designed to free Saudi Arabia from dependence on oil exports. The reform plan is based on three main pillars: the Kingdom's status as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, the Kingdom's determination to become a global investment powerhouse to stimulate the economy and diversify revenues and the Kingdom's intention to evolve into a global hub by taking advantage of its unique strategic location connecting three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa. In order to achieve its goals, Vision 2030 focuses on reshaping the education system to contribute to economic growth, in line with the market needs, providing equal

opportunities, focusing on skills and competencies of young generation as the important assets to attend global talent and qualifications, lower the rate of unemployment and increase the participation of women in the workforce. All have been tackled and discussed in the thesis. The themes of this thesis deal with the challenges facing KSA such as globalization, economic reform and human capital investment.

Keywords

Acknowledgement and Dedication

I could have never completed this journey on my own. I owe my life a debt of gratitude to **HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**, the ambassador of the Kingdom of KSA to the United Kingdom, for the support and encouragement offered to me by HRH to continue with my studies, for offering me the time to work and the chance to do this PhD at the same time. I owe a great of gratitude to HRH for being my inspiration to conduct an assessment of the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme, an inspiration to investigate human capital investment, for being always aware of the changes and the reforms of our beloved country and for being aware of the value and importance of the youth of the Kingdom. Thank you to HRH for having faith in me to do big things and facilitating my successes in so many ways, giving me the chance to develop my skills and to fulfill my ambitions.

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List of Abbreviations

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

CADRE: A human resource development and innovation institution

CEDAW: Convention on Elimination of Forms of Discrimination against Women

ESCWA: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

FDI: Foreign Direct Investment

GATS: General Agreement on Trade in Services

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GEF: Global Education Forum)

GESS: Gulf Educational Supplies and Solutions

GOTEVT: General Organisation for Technical Education and Vocational Training

G20: Group of 20 Countries and Central Bank government of significant economies in the world.

HC: Human Capital

HCI: Human Capital Investment

HRDF: Human Resource Development Fund

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

KASP: King Abdullah Scholarship Programme

KAUST: King Abdullah University of Science and Technology

KFUPM: King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals

KSA: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

MEPI: Middle East Partnership Initiative

MESA: The Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia

NDP: National Development Plan

SAGIA: Saudi Arabia General Investment Authority

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNPAC: United Nations Platform for Action Committee

WIT: Women in Technology

WTO: World Trade Organisation

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Introduction

Overview

This introduction provides an overview of the thesis. It sets out the key aims of the thesis and its structure and organisation, outlines the research questions and describes the methodology. Also, it discusses the main claims and arguments, which the thesis seeks to justify.

Introduction to the Subject

The Saudi government accepts that a key development challenge for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in the age of globalisation is to increase and diversify its economy and to enhance its integration into the global economy. This is born out of the recognition that a long-term dependency on oil revenues has hindered the emergence of alternative sources of development. Saudi planners accept that it is imperative to diversify the country's economic base by establishing structures that will deliver domestic-led economic development and gradually reduce reliance on oil income. For example, Dr Abdul Wahed al-Humaid, the Vice Minister of Labour, stated that 'We have to create jobs and to shift the economy into a higher level of productivity, more technology and knowledge-driven and less dependent on oil' (quoted in the Guardian, Burke, 30th, June 2011).

Demographic pressures are building. It is estimated that by 2020 the Saudi population will have increased by 35 percent, presenting an enormous domestic demand issue which current oil revenue projections will not be able to meet. Of the Saudi population, 70% are under 30 and 35% are under 16. Youth unemployment presently stands at an estimated 30% (Department of Statistics 2014). These demographics suggest that in the medium to long term, the country

faces serious issues around job creation and whether the education and training system can provide the skills required to meet supply-side requirements.

A focused study on the interaction of globalisation and human capital development in the KSA is thus important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it helps to evaluate existing policies, development action plans and government initiatives. Secondly, such an evaluation will assist in the attempt to identify weaknesses, best practice and unaddressed gaps. Thirdly, such a study will be critical for the development of new or complementary policy frameworks and the identification of fundamental insights as to the direction, content and management of human capital. However, this also raises questions as to whether the skilled workforce – the Saudized[1] labour force – is being adequately prepared to match such investment. A key justification for this study, then, is the need to focus attention on training and education measures, to test whether they will bring about the entrepreneurial development of the Saudi labour force required for sustained economic growth.

In this regard, one of the key measures undertaken by the Government of the KSA is the investment in training and education for the development of education and skills in the Saudi labour force. For this purpose, in 2005, the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP) was launched in the KSA. It was initially funded for five years. This was extended by three years in 2009 and has subsequently been extended to run until 2020. The Saudi Government invests approximately $1.8 billion per annum to fund the programme. KASP provides funding for

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[1] The term Saudization is officially used to denote a concerted government plan to replace expatriate labour with Saudi citizens.

domestic Saudi students to attend university degree programmes around the world, at Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral level. According to the Ministry of Education (2005), the selection of scholarships and academic discipline are made as per the requirement of the private sectors, national corporations, and the government ministries. The purpose of this selection is to accomplish the needs of the labour markets all over the Kingdom. The programme aims to educate Saudi youth so that they may contribute to the development of all private sectors and government fields.

KASP did not emerge out of a political or economic vacuum. Its implementation and extension, and the scale of the investment undertaken, reflect the urgency for reform identified by the Kingdom in light of changes and developments in the global economy that rendered existing models of development obsolete. This thesis addresses educational and training reform in KSA in the context of globalisation and/or the globalised economy. Specifically, the thesis focuses on investment in 'human capital' within KSA and its role in servicing the needs of the country's labour market and employment requirements. This involves a detailed case study of KASP, which has been identified as an investment in the principles of human capital. The programme aims to meet the needs of the Saudi labour market through an extensive programme of training and development and seeks to prepare the next generation of Saudi business people and entrepreneurs. A key aim of this thesis is to test the effectiveness of the scheme in meeting its stated objectives and to consider whether the programme can be seen as effective within a human capital 'best practice' framework.

In this regard, one of the key measures undertaken by the Government of the KSA is the investment in training and education for the development of education and skills in the Saudi labour force. For this purpose, in 2005, the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP) was launched in the KSA. It was initially funded for five years. This was extended by three years in 2009 and has subsequently been extended to run until 2020. The Saudi Government invests approximately $1.8 billion per annum to fund the programme. KASP provides funding for domestic Saudi students to attend university degree programmes around the world, at Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral level. According to the Ministry of Education (2005), the selection of scholarships and academic discipline are made as per the requirement of the private sectors, national corporations, and the government ministries. The purpose of this selection is to accomplish the needs of the labour markets all over the Kingdom. The programme aims to educate Saudi youth so that they may contribute to the development of all private sectors and government fields.

In this respect, it has been examined that the Vision 2030 of KSA also focuses on becoming a pioneer and serving as a successful global model of excellence on all fronts to make KSA an investment powerhouse. This vision thus demands the need for an educated, aware and skilled labour force for which the programmes such as KASP can play a highly significant role in addressing the need for skilled labour (Barnett, 2015). In this regard, this thesis is also aligned with the Vision 2030 of Saudi Arabia because it helps in evaluating the potential and effectiveness of the prevailing investment of the Saudi government in education and development of human capital, which can eventually play a key role in fulfilling the country's Vision 2030.

Moreover, one of the key objectives of the Vision 2030 of Saudi Arabia is to provide equal opportunities to everyone in the Kingdom, irrespective of gender or age, so that maximum skills contribution and the best of their abilities can be delivered towards the growth and development of the Kingdom (Al Alarabiya English, 2016). In this context, the lively and energetic youth of the Kingdom is being given high emphasis, where efforts are being made to hone their academic and practical skills and abilities. Among the youth, females are yet another crucial and highly skilled asset for the Kingdom, having a huge potential and high level of ambition. Further, more than 50% of the university graduates in the Kingdom are female, so it is imperative to provide them with additional opportunities to enhance their skills and invest in their productive capabilities, so that they can make a significant contribution towards the development of the society and economy (Appendix 3).

Research Questions

Investment in the Saudi educational system is significant. Over a quarter of Saudi GDP per year goes towards the provision of education, making this one of the largest investment strategies in the world. A huge building programme has been undertaken to provide new schools, technical colleges and higher education facilities. The question of how effective this investment is in meeting stated needs, however, remains open. For that reason, it is important to assess and evaluate the programmes that the government has put in place (such as KASP), to support the economic performance of the country by investing in Saudi youth.

In this regard, the Saudi government claims that its education and training reforms provide the supply-side requirements to aid long-term economic

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alternatives to oil revenues. This thesis seeks to test the strength of that claim by asking the following overarching research question:

'How has the Government of KSA sought to invest in human capital through the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP), and to what extent has the programme been successful?'

This triggers the need to undertake an in-depth investigation into the impact of the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme with respect to soft skills acquisition, gender equality and the role of the Ministry of Education, represented by the Cultural Bureau, in making the programme fruitful and efficient.

The primary aim of this thesis is to address this question, to examine whether the initiatives in human capital programmes taken by the government of KSA are effective and fully developed for the efficient delivery of economic policy goals, or not. To address this overarching research question some further and more specific questions have been formulated with a focus on skills acquisition and acceptance of change while studying in developed countries. These questions are:

1.   How does KASP help Saudi students in learning to adapt to cultural change and in acquiring new soft skills while studying in an open and advanced society? How willing are the students to engage with a new cultural environment and what challenges do they encounter when trying to do so?

2.   Does KASP facilitate gender equality by providing career and skill development opportunities to Saudi women? What are the obstacles facing female students taking part in the KASP and how do these affect the quality and the outcome of the programme?

3.   Is the Ministry of Education represented by the Cultural Bureau supportive of Saudi students taking part in KASP? Does the Bureau effectively help students overcome such obstacles and to develop their knowledge and expertise?

Methodology

In order to answer these questions the thesis will make use of textual analysis, survey data, focus groups and original interviews.

The Saudi government, in its initiation of programmes such as KASP, is showing that investment in human capital is a significant strand of its future growth and development strategies. This raises the question as to whether such an investment represents a successful intervention.

It is not the primary intention of this thesis to examine and assess why Saudi policymakers felt it necessary to draw up a programme such as KASP. However, it is important to note that according to the policy makers, it is essential to plan for sustainable development of human resources in KSA. Thus, the KASP which was supported by the KSA was launched and implemented by the Ministry of Education. Through this program, the main objective of the policymakers was to sponsor academically bright Saudi students so that they are able to pursue higher studies in world's best universities. Then, on completion of the course, the graduates had to return to the country to contribute towards Kingdom's growth and development.

The aim is to test whether such a programme has been a successful intervention. Ultimately, the claims of KASP will be tested via evaluation of the findings and

views of the students and the graduates of KASP: the participating students of the programme. Principally, this will be achieved by a questionnaire, conducting focus groups, and selecting interviews (see Appendix 2), with students studying abroad under KASP sponsorship and those who have completed the programme and returned to KSA.

Examples of key questions that the interviews will be looking to cover include the following: What subject areas were the students taught? What are their views on the content and organisation of their studies, including its usefulness and level of expertise? These questions have been determined because they will help in examining the key skills that the students are able to gain with the support of the scholarship programme. This will allow for an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of the measures for human capital development undertaken by the Government of KSA.

Enrolled students and graduates of the programme were questioned using a triangulation method. The questions focused on the skills and training acquired through studying in different cultural contexts and in developed countries. Respondents were asked about whether KASP was helpful in giving women empowerment and gender equality and provided women with similar opportunities to men. Questions also considered the role of the Ministry of Education represented by the Cultural Bureau and how supportive they were in regards to the KASP goals and vision. Furthermore, participants were asked about the following: employment opportunities and records post-enrolment; the skills or knowledge gained; whether they learned new skills or developed existing skills; what skills they learned from studying abroad; and obstacles and

difficulties they faced in developing their skills. As the intention was to engage with individual and selected students in a systematic way, a more generalised survey was used as part of the methodology. This helped in organising and executing the study in a more efficient manner.

Focus groups and interviews were also conducted, which will be further explained in the research methodology chapter, for which the interviewees were represented by the students studying in the USA and the UK. The identified participants were organised on the basis of the different UK-based universities for conducting a group interview. This section of the research focused on the key features of the human capital literature – soft skills – to test themes such as Saudi assimilation in a different work and life cultures, in this case, Western European countries such as the UK, Germany and France (Appendix 1).

As the impacts on employment opportunities for Saudi women are a key feature of the thesis, questions were specifically tailored towards a female perspective, which helped in examining the impact of the scholarship initiative on the skills development among female students. The aim was to consider the extent to which KASP had a noticeable impact in terms of improving gender equality within the broader context of economic development. Attention was also given to enrolment and graduation rates, as well as post-graduate employment history and experiences, which helped in evaluating the overall impact of the scholarship programme on the development of entrepreneurial and professional skills among the students.

The interviewing of 'live' subjects does bring about ethical issues. The proposal received clearance from the University of East Anglia (UEA) ethics board. The

interviewees were anonymised in the data analysis for the purpose of maintaining data confidentiality and reliability of the responses.

Thesis Timeframe

Researchers considering the issue of Middle East politics have to address the question of an appropriate timeframe for study. This thesis covers the period from 2000 to 2015. This timeframe was chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, the period broadly includes the high point of debates centred on the issue of globalisation, a key context for this thesis. Secondly, it includes KASP's output ten years after its launch.

A further reason for this timeframe is that it involves the accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and key attempts to liberalise the Saudi economy. These attempts at liberalisation include critical stages of development plans, education investment and trade liberalisation. The period also covers key global events such as the September 11 attacks and the Arab Spring. This time saw a turning point in the Saudi educational system and second thoughts concerning religious dominance in education. KASP was launched a few years after the 9/11 attack, since the image created a high demand for educational reform in the country. Besides, government awareness of the development and reform of its economy has also been enhanced in the recent time period. For this reason, it can be considered that like other Islamic countries, the last 10 years have proved quite crucial for the economy. In this regard, the presented timeframe allows the reader to have a clear understanding regarding the recent development and issues.

Chapter Summaries

This thesis develops over the course of seven chapters, excluding the introduction. The thesis begins with an overview and introduction to the study. Chapter One summarises the context(s) of reform, setting out the main reasons why the Saudi Government considers it necessary to embark on a project such as KASP. This will include references to the ultimate impact of globalisation on the development strategies of the country; the declining value of the oil market for the Saudi state; and an overreliance on an expatriate foreign workforce to fill the 'skills gap' between education and job requirements.

Chapter Two will explain the main themes of the literature on human capital. In summary, human capital and successful investments in human capital programmes are said to include: 1) active stakeholder engagement; 2) significant enrolment rates; 3) investment in training and education at all levels; 4) programmes tailored to identified skills gaps; 5) development of broader non-monetary or economic skills; 6) development and increased participation in underrepresented groups (notably women); 7) successful enrolment in productive economic or workplace activity by graduates of human capital programmes.

It is against these criteria that, ultimately, the claims of KASP will be tested. The aim of the chapter will be to detail the up-to-date findings on human capital and outline its key features. As well as assessing the field of human capital, the aim of this chapter is to discover the fundamental features of 'best practice' in human capital. This will set up a framework for analysis to test Saudi human capital

projects, notably KASP. The extent to which KASP adheres to best practice will be examined.

Chapter Three will begin by detailing the background to the Saudi educational system and will provide a full picture of the organisation of education and training in KSA, before introducing the case study of the thesis: KASP. This chapter will also discuss the development and implementation of KASP through analysis of policy documents, pamphlets and speeches.

While the opening chapters set out the historical and political context of the thesis, the testing of the overarching research question will be undertaken through Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four will describe the research methodology of the study and introduce the methods that will be used to collect data for the study. The chapter will explain the concept of the methodology and summarise the individual research project, which constitutes the entire process of conducting research. The chapter will discuss and analyse the formulated overarching research question and test the criteria for its validity. Further, it will justify the methodologies used for analysing the collected data, which significantly contributes to the final findings.

Chapter Five will evaluate the responses of students and graduates of KASP via original and detailed interviews. It will also analyse all the data and information collected from the fieldwork. The chapter will evaluate the methods used in this study and put them into perspective with the intention of demonstrating the adequacy of the reform programmes in their response to the demands of the labour market. What has worked and what has not, and why? What are the key challenges facing the implementation of reform? Why is there growing scepticism

about the success of the reforms? The chapter will conclude by drawing on the findings of the research and outlining the validity of the overarching research question, or otherwise.

Chapter Six will further discuss the findings and their implications. These lead to recommendations for policy makers. Chapter Seven, the conclusion, will then summarise the study and take into consideration future reform programmes.

Chapter One

Globalisation and the Challenge of Reform

1.1 Introduction

This thesis addresses the Saudi government's reform programme in terms of workplace skills requirements and investment in human capital projects, notably the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP). In order to address why the Saudi government considers it necessary to make such investments, it is important to consider the key contexts of this reform programme. This chapter discusses the four key globalisation factors shaping Arab nations, outlined by Atzori (2015) and also by BuMetea (2013): economy, education, unemployment and governance. The interaction between these factors and their impact on human development will be discussed in order to consider the impact on human development. Furthermore, in this regard, different contexts of globalisation will be explored. That is to say, the Saudi government has to, as with other countries, recognise the changed economic environment posed by the challenges of globalisation. This chapter will, therefore, summarise the main features of the debate around the effects of globalisation and will also examine the issue in relation to the Gulf region and to Saudi Arabia in particular.

Another important context relates to demographic pressures on Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia faces a growing population 'bulge' over the coming decades that will increase pressure to provide economic opportunities for markedly increased workforce numbers. The chapter will also suggest that oil – Saudi Arabia's key export – cannot be relied on in the coming decades to provide the resources

required, thus necessitating a programme of reform to diversify the Saudi economic base. The need to reduce the numbers of expatriate workers and increase female participation in the Saudi economy will also be specifically discussed.

1.2 Background

Under the monarchy of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the seventh King of KSA, who took the throne after the death of his half-brother King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz (who established KASP), KSA is one of the greatest oil exporting countries. The population of the country is 30.8 million (Department of Statistics 2014) whereas the GDP is $1.6 trillion with an annual growth of 3.6%. It is also noted that unemployment in the country is 5.6%, inflation is 2.7% and Foreign Direct Investment within the country is $8 billion. Furthermore, it is one of the lead countries that rule the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. It is determined that the profits from oil account for 90% of the earnings received from export, as well as 80% of government profits. Furthermore, KSA played a key role in encouraging foreign investment, as well as economic diversification by collaborating with the World Trade Organisation in the year 2005. The economy of the country has been rising at a yearly rate of 5% during the last five years. The country is taking measures for economic development by pursuing reforms that are aimed at diversifying the economy and improving the growth of employment, especially in the private sector (World Bank 2015).

Concerning the legal environment of KSA, the judicial system of the country is non-transparent and non-autonomous. Furthermore, the court system is weakly coordinated with the executive branch and laws that safeguard private property

are subordinated to the practices of Islam. For example, as per Islamic law, the citizens of KSA are expected to give a 2.5% compulsory religious tax instead of the contemporary taxes such as income or corporate tax (Saudi Arabia: Tax Law).

The country suffers from inefficiency in its regulatory system and there are greater constraints on the business establishment in the country as compared to other developed economies. Some initiatives for employment have been taken in the past, but there is no provision of a compulsory minimum wage. Imports and exports are also affected by government regulations. The mean rate of the import tariff in the country is 3.6% and there are restrictions on the importation of second-hand clothes and cars. It is to be noted that investment by foreign entities in several sectors of the economy is either forbidden or capped by the country's government, and this action hampers the development of the economy. The government has set requirements of minimum capital for international investors who wish to invest in the country's economy.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a nation of vital importance, both regionally and internationally. A member of both the G20 and World Trade Organisation (WTO), it holds great influence over the world economy (Achoui 2009). Nonetheless, economically, the country faces some challenges, including an overdependence on oil and bio-chemicals. Also, in the domestic labour market, there is a high dependence on expatriates, as well as low female participation and problems posed by unemployment. A weak link exists between educational output and the needs of the labour market (Ip, 2012).

Excessive dependence on oil is dangerous for the economic sustainability of KSA. It has been shown that the government is investing the profits from oil exports in

areas such as youth employment, infrastructural development, research centres and subsidised fuel, but the constant drop in the price of oil is posing a threat to the continuation of such economic development (Gallucci, 2016). With this in mind, the government of KSA is making efforts to develop other sectors like tourism services, petrochemicals and financial services by creating employment in the private sector and inviting foreign investment. Despite all these measures of the government, the efforts seem to be ineffective and oil revenues remain the backbone of the KSA economy (Gallucci, 2016). These challenges and the measures to overcome them form the core of this thesis.

In summary, KSA is facing both external and internal pressure to develop and attain higher educational and human resource development standards, enabling it to keep pace with globalisation and rapid change. As a result, it is essential for the Kingdom to focus on the area of human development (HD) to produce the sufficiently qualified, skilful and competitive workforce needed to compete internationally. Here, the challenge for KSA is to maintain a particularly delicate balance between tradition and modernity. To maintain this delicate balance, KSA is reacting to change in a straightforward manner. The government has established several five-year plans aimed at development. Within this, human development (HD) – addressed more fully in the next chapter – is considered of particular importance. Accordingly, in 2000, the Saudi government set up a fund to support ongoing HD efforts. This fund was intended to improve the population's qualifications and skills, and support the country's 'Saudization' programme.

The government acknowledges that a key development challenge is to increase and diversify its economy, so as to enhance its integration into the global economy. Saudi planners accept that it is imperative to diversify the base of the economy by establishing structures that will deliver domestically led economic development and gradually reduce reliance on oil income.

Demographic pressures are also building (UN 2001, 2010), with the Saudi population reaching more than 27 million in 2010. It is expected to increase a further 35% over the following decade. This will entail enormous levels of domestic demand which current oil revenue projections will not be able to meet: 70% of the population is aged under 30, while 35% is under 16 and youth unemployment presently stands at an estimated 30% (Burke, 2011). These demographics suggest that in the medium to long term, the country faces serious issues around job creation, raising questions about whether its current education and training system can provide the skills required.

In 2005, KSA commenced its eighth National Development Plan (NDP), which incorporates four successive five-year plans and is scheduled to end in 2024. Diversification of the economic base is stated as one of the main objectives of economic and social development. It has been acknowledged that a qualified, educated labour force is a necessary pre-condition for economic development. Evaluation of different five-year development plans since 1970 has shown that they have been unable to facilitate the objectives set by the government. There has been a lack of clarity to strategy formation that was supposedly aimed at economic diversification by extending support to economic sectors except oil, such as tourism, agriculture, mining and financial services. The failure of the

developmental plan to boost other economic sectors has emphasised the extent to which the oil industry is a dominating and driving force of the economy (Gallucci, 2016). However, due to a recent 70% drop in oil prices, the government of KSA is experiencing a budget deficit worth $98 billion and a significant decrease in the profits earned from exporting oil, and oil exports contribute to 80% of the overall budget profit. This has created a threatening situation for the economy of KSA that demands essential and timely intervention by the government. Therefore, the government is now determined to reduce overdependence on oil and prepare for times when prices of oil might drop. For this purpose, the government is planning an economic transformation through bringing economic changes such as policy alterations for other economic sectors. The economic changes also involve privatisation of those sectors that are under state ownership and reducing the amount of public spending in areas of education, the military and healthcare (Gallucci, 2016).

Constant fluctuations in the global oil market and the worsening in the prices of crude oil exemplify the compromised position and significant vulnerability of the economy of KSA to highly volatile oil markets. Furthermore, due to the lack of human resources and restricted productivity in other sectors of export, there could be a crisis situation for the KSA economy until there are improvements in oil prices or successful economic diversification takes place (Gallucci, 2016).

In terms of volume and resources committed, some progress appears to have been made during the last two decades, through expansion of education and training capacities. The government has made a massive investment in the education sector over the last decade, founding eight new universities out of a

total of twenty-five high capacity state universities, and establishing the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) as a model of knowledge-based research and application. However, this raises questions as to whether the skilled workforce – a 'Saudized' labour force – will be adequately equipped to match such investment. A key justification for this study, then, lies in the need to focus attention on measuring training and education outputs with regards to skills required for the labour market, in order to test whether they will bring about the entrepreneurial development of the Saudi labour force needed to support sustained economic growth.

KSA has taken some actions to reform its national education system and to provide its employment with appropriately qualified Saudi citizens. Furthermore, action has been taken to improve economic diversity and to support additional training and jobs amongst the Saudi population. The Saudi government has acknowledged the need to improve internal HD and is working towards this goal.

Pressure for educational and workplace training reform has come from both internal and external forces. The government has stood solidly against any foreign interference, and insisted that change will come gradually from within the country, and through its people. Bahgat (1999) notes that the government has allowed some degree of internal criticism, and has worked on recommendations from education officials and employees through national dialogue. Many of their suggestions were aimed directly at limiting the influence of extremist clerics in the educational system. Many believe that Saudi educational reform is indeed vital in fighting hatred and violence that is against humanity and stands against the open world of globalisation.

It has been acknowledged that the education system of KSA is poorly constructed and there is a need to reform the current system of education. The current state of the education system has emerged due to several reasons, including the absence of accountability for teachers' performance, inappropriate planning skills for classroom management and teaching, as well as a lack of standardisation of the assessment system (Alnahdi, 2014). It is noted that KSA might face great difficulty in modifying its education system in comparison to other developed nations. It is essential that the new reforms framed by the government of KSA should include multiple aspects connected with education, and not merely be perceived as information provided in the textbooks. Before the construction of new reforms for the country's education system, is it recommended that officials review and analyse the main phases of changes that have taken place in the education system at a global level. This could help the officials in bettering the process of reform and aid in preventing reform problems made by other countries (Alnahdi, 2014).

With this in mind, the Ministry of Education of KSA (MESA) is undertaking initiatives in order to reform the education system of KSA. As a part of reforming the education system, MESA has formulated a fresh strategy in which 80% of the importance will be assigned to analysis of the efficiency of the teachers through the performance of their students in cases of standardised examinations. Such a reform will help in analysing the performance of the teachers (Alnahdi, 2014).

The culture of KSA highlights a specific religious condition that is indirectly responsible for giving shape to the country's existing social and cultural beliefs, as well as the quality of the social and political reforms. Islam has a major

influence on the lives of the people of KSA and has a pervasive influence on governmental policies and functions. However, as others have noted, modifications to the country's religious practices will come gradually with the support of consensus and not through pressure from the West (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005).

In KSA, cultural issues such as traditions, customs and religious values continue to play a highly significant role in the country. For example, young people do not tend to look for manual labour jobs; instead, they prefer to apply for more administrative posts. Moreover, female participation in the job market is still restricted, even by women themselves. For example, according to the 2007 World Bank report, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) simultaneously features both the highest population growth rates and lowest rates of female and youth participation in the world labour market (World Bank, 2007).

In this context, the government of KSA is taking steps towards religious development in the country; these involve enhancing religious tolerance and eradicating elements that promote extremism. It also includes examining universal Islamic policies to ensure that they are in synchronisation with the tolerant Islam practiced by a large number of Saudi people (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005).

However, in KSA, the Third National Dialogue meeting, which took place in 2004, addressed different social issues and opened channels for communication in the Kingdom. It also set the tone for fundamental changes. The third meeting was the most successful as it dealt with sensitive issues such as segregation in Saudi society and the fact that Islam does not address the issue of women working and

earning a comfortable living. According to Kechichian (2013, p20-22), dialogue participants called for the taking of more steps to prepare women for better employment opportunities, as new fields of specialisation were opened up. Indeed, there was a realisation that a large number of female university graduates ought to be absorbed in the workforce to better serve the nation, as well as reduce dependence on foreign labour.

Therefore, from the above, it can be concluded that the dialogue on women's affairs in the Third National Meeting was a valuable addition to Saudi socio-economic reform, according to reform initiatives in KSA. Thus, it can be inferred that the key dialogue on women affairs played a major role in the improvement of social and economic reforms in KSA. In the Fourth National Meeting (Jeddah) - Young People's Expectations (December 7–9, 2004), the many challenges facing Saudi youth were discussed, focusing mainly on the issue of unemployment and measures that should be undertaken by local government as well as companies operating within the country.

1.3 The Impact of Globalisation

The necessity for reform and the need to produce a more varied and diverse economic base and workforce, has been brought about by the advent of a more global or globalised world market. In other words, the Saudi government faces global competition for limited markets and, like any other country, has to maintain a competitive presence. Therefore, in context, there is a need to review the complexity of the concept of globalisation and discuss the impact and implications of globalisation for KSA.

Since its inception, the concept of 'globalisation' has produced numerous competing definitions and interpretations. The Levin Institute of the State University of New York defined globalisation as a process under which governments of different countries and companies have interaction among them for meeting some common goals. In the process of globalisation, various kinds of activities are accomplished, such as trade activities at the international level and foreign investment. The globalisation process affects the global society and its economic and political development, further development and prosperity, the health and social well-being of people and their environmental and cultural aspects.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA, 2007) stated that the term globalisation can be described in multiple ways. In the economic context, it can be defined as the elimination and decline of the barriers between national boundaries to assist the flow of capital, services, goods and labour; however, there remain certain obstacles in the working flow. The phenomenon of globalisation is quite old, since it began in the late 19th century. In the period of World War I, however, it slowed down, and this continued until the 20th century's third quarter. This slowdown was a result of the protective measures taken by countries to defend their industries; still, the phenomenon of globalisation picked up pace during the last quarter of the 20th century.

A simpler definition was provided by Bertucci and Alberti (2001) in their book 'Globalisation and the State', which portrayed the intricacy of the term. Globalisation is the exchange of human resources, ideas, services, finances, goods and information, which help in bringing various social, economic and cultural

activities in balance and harmony. Although lots of opportunities are created with the support of globalisation, it also includes various costs. One cannot term globalisation as right or wrong based on the possibilities it creates, or the cost it involves, nor can we blame globalisation for current world issues.

It is evident from the above definitions that, in today's world, no country can be considered immune to the influence and impact of globalisation. Industry, for example, has seen the emergence of worldwide production markets and broader access to a range of foreign products for consumers and companies. A global common market now exists, based upon freedom of exchange of goods and capital. Financial markets no longer operate within an isolated environment and instead have become so intertwined that day-to-day financial transactions and exchange rates are reacting to upward and downward movements in all markets worldwide: the 2008-9 financial crisis represents a typical example.

Toro-Hardy (2002, p34-37) argues that globalisation supports the free circulation of goods, ideas, capital and people. It carries sources of work to places where the cheapest manpower is available. Toro-Hardy stated that the roots of globalisation could be traced to five centuries ago with European empires capturing the African and Asian supply routes. With the advent of technology since the Second World War, consumer goods and the service sector have observed a significant rate of evolution. With the help of technological advances such as underwater cables, the service and communication sector grew, leading to international agencies that operate around the world, such as the BBC.

Bertucci and Alberti (2001) note that technological development and entrepreneurship represent key driving forces of globalisation, but these are not

the only factors responsible for such rapidly intensifying global economic integration. Four key forces drive this trend: the rise of global social networks; entrepreneurship; technological innovation and the subsequent simplification of communications and associated costs; and the liberalisation of trade and investments. Since the 1980s, increasing numbers of governments have supported economic liberalisation through enhanced freedom of commerce, facilitated by financial sector deregulation and the removal of certain foreign exchange controls (Cable, 1995; Bertucci and Alberti, 2001).

Survival in this new global business market requires nations to improve productivity levels and the quality of their products. Moreover, this has been a technological revolution with information flow between remote locations, thanks to the advent of fibre-optic communications, satellites and the increased availability of telephone networks and the Internet.

In politics, many scholars now believe that globalisation has induced a transformation of sovereignty. Countries that enjoy greater economic and military power, and play host to powerful international financial institutions, have become so influential in world politics that they are able to exercise pressure designed to impact upon policies and decisions which should be the sovereign domain of national governments. Developing nations have been forced to yield to pressure from international financial institutions (believed to be influenced by superpowers such as the US and China in their decision-making processes) and introduce structural adjustment programmes and privatisation in the fields of health, employment, water and elsewhere.

Globalisation has also led to frantic efforts for international cooperative and collective action to tackle climate change, cross-border pollution, over-fishing of the oceans and the spread of invasive species. Moreover, continuous growth of cross-cultural contact has resulted in ever-increasing levels of cultural diffusion with regard to foreign products and ideas, new technology and practices.

The impact of globalisation can also be felt in language: English, for example, is becoming increasingly popular, both as a means of communication, and for the access it provides to arts, science, literature, business transactions, legal and ethical spheres (such as the International Criminal Court or the International Court of Justice), and many other areas. Globalisation has many advocates and critics, but most commentators tend to agree that the benefits outweigh the downsides. Many of its critics, however, do not resist globalisation per se, but rather, call for a rational approach to its exercise.

Bertucci and Alberti (2001) emphasise that globalisation is often perceived as a deterministic force that transcends influence. It is worth noting, however, that behind economic globalisation, there remains the process of individual governments setting policies and rules and making or breaking agreements. This defines the parameters of the globalised economy by supporting the actions of global market forces. Due to international power imbalances, some countries have more leverage than others with regard to setting the international economic and political agenda. This translates into the fact that current forms of globalisation tend to be shaped by the most influential parts of the world, and may not always meet the needs of developing and transitional countries.

1.4 The Arab World and Globalisation

Before tackling the challenges facing KSA from globalisation, it is important to examine globalisation's effects on the region and people's lives. Because of the many similarities shared by its members, the 'Arab World' is often viewed as a single entity (Abu et al., 1976). However, it is important to understand that immense differences exist among Arab nations, especially in terms of their views on and approaches to the rest of the world. Understanding of religious beliefs and teachings also shape how each country's people see and treat issues relating to the West (Saidi, 2003). Clement (2005: 105-112) comments that the extent to which globalisation is tolerated or resisted places the region at a sort of crossroads.

According to Baha and McIrvin (1976), Arab countries have the desire to grow through industrialisation, improve standards of living for their people, raise income per capita and improve and modernise health facilities. However, despite globalisation's capacity to help the region achieve its stated goals and objectives, most Arabs still perceive it to be a threat to their long-held beliefs (Clement and Springborg, 2010).

Perceptions of globalisation vary from one group to another. Very few people in the region support the idea and the majority are openly opposed to it (Rabba and McLean, 2002). Many Arabs are struggling to comprehend the rapid changes occurring in the region, and attempt to voice their concerns through a variety of means, including in some cases, terrorist behaviour (Elbadawi, 2005). It is, however, incorrect to state that all Arabs are completely against globalisation. In certain countries, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, the

majority of the population has demonstrated massive support for globalisation (Noland and Pack, 2004).

The case of KSA is sometimes difficult to understand for non-Saudis, particularly when discussing the fact that Saudis do not seem to accept change easily. This is due to the complex make-up of Saudi society. Most of the population are conservatives and have been isolated from the outside world; as a result, they have a fear of change and do not easily accept others. This was especially true before the boom in technology. This will be explained further towards the end of the chapter.

There has been change in KSA, but it has been a slow process and some issues are sensitive to tackle, especially women's issues, reform of the educational system and religion; these are usually tackled with care and are often sugar-coated. It was not until King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz came to the throne that the wheel of change was pushed forward in many fields. After his death, his obituary in *The Guardian* focused on his efforts to promote change and the influence of Saudi elites: 'Many Saudis had urged Abdullah to initiate change on social, educational, youth and economic issues, when he was a crown prince […] Abdullah will be remembered as someone who survived the wave of change' (Al Rasheed, 2015).

Some people believe that globalisation has brought about a potentially threatening atmosphere for the Arab countries, since in current times, for a country to be economically progressive, an ample availability of natural resources is not enough. Furthermore, due to increasing globalisation, Arab states are reviewed and examined on other economic factors such as skills of manpower, national investment, environment quality and responding

capabilities of producers towards the opportunities of the international economy. It is essential for Saudis to understand that mere revenues earned from oil reserves will not be sufficient for economic expansion that is sustainable and that heavy dependence is responsible for diminishing the economic prosperity of the Arab countries (Alnahdi, 2014).

According to Power:

> *'Globalisation brings with it a mix of opportunities and threats for every nation, culture and educational system. On the one hand, the removal of barriers and new technologies create new possibilities for intercultural exchange and dialogue, but on the other, we face the danger of a new global imperial regime in which political, economic and communication culture is unilaterally favoured over all others.' (2000, p.152).*

1.5 Benefits of Globalisation

There is no doubt that globalisation is beneficial to peoples' lives, especially in learning and knowledge. Wheeler (1966) identified education as the key challenge facing Arab countries and stated that until this problem was solved, they would continue to fall behind those with more advanced and efficient education systems. Forty-five years later, Watkins (2011) confirmed this, referring to the ways in which a deficit in education is fanning the flames of the Arab world.

According to Rabba and McLean (2002), those in the region who support globalisation perceive education to be one of its primary benefits. Low levels of education are the main reason behind limited growth in the area. Therefore, the Arab world will be better equipped for future growth and success if more people are better educated.

In the context of the education system, globalisation can help the Arab countries to enrich their existing education systems. For instance, if Arab countries shake hands and connect with GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services), it could significantly improve the quality of higher education in the Arabian countries. Collaboration with GATS will essentially help in removing the challenges that exist in the case of importing, as well as exporting education-based services. In addition to this, the collaboration of Arabian countries with GATS will promote greater knowledge accessibility irrespective of borders. It will also be helpful for KSA since its cities are dispersed over a large area, so the technology-enabled educational programmes can be of great value. Furthermore, programmes like distance-learning services and programmes of e-learning can enhance women's education and facilitate the academic development of students (UNESCO, 2007).

The globalisation of Arabian countries can help in revolutionising the education system through the development of academic curriculum and enrichment in teaching and assessment techniques in accordance with global standards (UNESCO, 2007). Furthermore, globalisation opens up areas of learning through technology, such as the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the teaching of the Arabian schools and universities. The advent of globalisation in the education system of KSA will help institutions to improve and assure quality learning through the inclusion of a global academic syllabus and curriculum. Globalisation can also benefit the Arabian students by enriching their current education level through the greater accessibility of global education, as well as facilitation of cultural exchange between the students of differing cultural backgrounds (UNESCO, 2007).

To avail itself of the benefits of globalisation in education, it is essential for the government of KSA to meet various challenges, such as improving the educational infrastructure, ensuring the appropriate availability of learning resources and their timely availability. These changes and improvements in the education system will especially benefit the people of KSA towards continuous and standardised learning, irrespective of the geographical space, age variation and job conditions (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013).

A key benefit of globalisation is that it positively addresses the problem of unemployment. Increased levels of foreign direct investment (FDI) result in many new jobs. Indeed, it has been claimed that increasing trade through globalisation leads to parallel increases in the wealth of all nations. KSA recently attracted foreign investors to do business in the Kingdom. It was during a visit to Washington DC by King Salman of the Kingdom when the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) announced that it would be opening the stock exchange to foreign investors (Out-Law.com, 2015).

Technological advances, such as the Internet, have been demonstrated to be particularly useful for people living in conflict with oppressive governments. Globalisation is influencing some Arab governments towards a greater respect for human rights. However, there remains huge difficulties in separating religion from politics. In the Middle East, this has resulted in high resistance to globalisation from some Islamic activists (Chase and Hamsawy, 2006).

In other Arab countries, globalisation through modern and advanced technology, including the international network of media and technologies of satellite communication will promote KSA and give it a universal reach. Furthermore, it is

known that a country with superiority in technology has a distinct advantage because of its global appeal (Moussalli, 2012). Globalisation can help in the eradication of cultural barriers in Arab countries through integration into the international economies. It is necessary for globalisation to be given essential support from the socio-economic and educational institutions so that Arab countries can prosper and stand as equals along with other international cultures (Moussalli, 2012).

Much of the developing world continues to pay insufficient attention to the importance of understanding the needs and the future of the emerging generation. To put it another way, globalisation has in some ways contributed to emphasising a gap between generations. Therefore, it is important to identify this gap and to foster strong inter-generational links, especially regarding educational policymaking.

On the other hand, Islamic extremists in particular, regard Western influences as corrupting and disruptive. Their opposition to the expansion of such influences has been observed as a response to both perceived and actual aggression from the West. As Waywell (2006, p. 167) has noted, the Arabian countries follow the Western nations in respect of the creation of employment opportunities, technical development, education and productivity. Despite this fact, a majority of Arabian countries blame globalisation and Western economies for the economic problems encountered by them. Roy (2005) notes that the emergence of global Islam and globalisation overlapped with Americanisation. The rapid development of American values and cultures may conflict with particular religious values of Islam and bring together the essential elements of

fundamentalism, causing religious conflict due to globalisation. Values and cultures from America have spread throughout the world by many means, such as the Internet and social media, and people travelling around the world (Roy, 2005).

Conversi (2009), in her consideration of globalisation and ethnicity, expands on Roy's argument. She concludes that where globalisation is positioned as synonymous with Americanisation, conflicts develop at some levels. The globalisation process is unidirectional and in certain forms, it aggravates internal pressure, leading to increased internal state conflict. When it is combined with the failure of state legitimacy, ethnic conflict and nationalism can develop, rather than the blending of ethnic groups and cultural fusion. Therefore, with regards to KASP, it is concluded that globalisation has led to the emergence of some key issues regarding the development of human capital. The major issues to consider are how to look rationally at the power and influence of America and create paths for KSA to achieve success.

Since the 1970s, KSA has embarked on a number of successive five-year socio-economic development plans, in the form of a strategy to generate desired changes. The government aimed to attract large numbers of foreign professionals, who in turn would bring more changes and challenges to the country. The most obvious signs of change can be found in the social reforms taking place. Social scientists argue that economic changes shape the social organisation of society. Niblock (2006) stated that there are strong ties between economic changes and social organisation, and their importance to one another persists. However, for GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states in general, and KSA

in particular, the dominant or governing factor seems to be that of social organisation. Ideology dictates the nature and direction of change in the economy.

The challenges posed by the diversification of the Saudi economy – and more precisely, the chosen means of achieving it within the context of globalisation, i.e., education and training – forms, along with the importance of skills acquirement, the main subject area of this thesis. According to Niblock, the GCC states are run by newly enriched social classes that tend to view capitalism through the eyes of those raised in traditional, rural, agrarian settings. Thus, in the Gulf, globalisation – far from representing an imported package of lifestyles and values – is considered as the competitive regime of the local and traditional culture. What becomes clear from any examination of Saudi development literature is the pre-existing dominance of oil on the Kingdom's economy and society.

1.6 Over Reliance on Oil

Another key context necessitating the need for reform is the Saudi government's perceived over-reliance on oil. Yorke (1980) noted that those products such as oil and its related exports that are owned and manufactured by the government, contribute to 90 to 95% of total export earnings, and contribute to approximately 80% of overall revenue. What follows is a brief overview of the existing literature on the economic context of oil, in terms of income, and also its effect on Saudi entrepreneurship, foreign labour, and the role of the state, education and religion.

Shihab (2001) emphasises that there is widespread acceptance in the literature of the benefits of the 'oil bonanza' for the Saudi state, economy and wider society.

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Unlike the experience of other 'developing' countries, Saudi oil wealth has meant the country has avoided the necessity of 'conditional' loans, via organisations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Its enormous revenues have facilitated KSA in maintaining control over the path of its development.

However, reliance on oil alone may result in medium to long-term economic harm to the country, and there is a subsequent need to diversify. According to Hofstede (2001), the resource itself is not the issue but, rather, how it is managed and used (or not used) for the wider good. In the Saudi case, it can be argued that the value of any economic return on oil reserves has to be balanced against dependency, uneven regional development, social alienation, internal migration and a 'drop off in entrepreneurial stamina' (p.315). Therefore, Hofstede argues that the benefits derived from oil might be a liability also, instead of being an asset (p.322). The benefits obtained from oil as an export model have also been questioned. Sullivan (2004) notes that 'oil consuming', not 'oil producing' countries, have experienced more sustained economic growth. Arab oil-producing states have not managed to accomplish and maintain growth, furthermore the gains in productivity over the last two decades have been negative.

Others stress the deadening impact of the natural availability and export of oil on the Saudi business or entrepreneurial ethos. First, oil wealth has in some ways discouraged the start-up of alternative sources of profit-generating activities. According to Vassiliev (2000), the business environment encouraged by oil wealth has led to a focus on commercial management, rather than innovative or

creative activity. Allen (1998) similarly underscores the lure of short-term oil gain, and how this has frustrated the cultivation of an entrepreneurial sector in the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been referred to as a 'rentier' economy, owing to its heavy overreliance on the proceeds of the rent of an indigenous resource (oil) to external clients. According to Yates:

> *'Contracts are provided to express gratitude instead of reflecting economic rationale. The civil officers believe that being available in their offices during the working hours is their principle duty. The industrialists leave the industry and participate in real-estate speculation or other particular situations related to the growing oil sector. However, the brightest one leaves businesses and seeks employment in the government sector. The manual labour and other tasks that are considered inappropriate are given out to the foreign labourers; the remittance to whom creates pressure on the rentier economy. In certain extreme situations, the income is obtained from citizenship'* (Yates, 1996: 183).

State control of the oil export business, as well as its collection and distribution of revenues, has, in the view of some commentators, had an extremely detrimental impact. For Pryce-Jones (2002), the management of vast oil revenue is a recipe for corruption and stagnation. Gylfason (1999), however, adopts an even broader approach towards the phenomena by pointing out that not only economic growth, but also education, human capital and savings, investments and physical capital strategies are all undermined by an excess of natural resources. According to this argument, the oil boom of the 1970s left policymakers unprepared to cope efficiently with comprehensive oil incomes, something that permeated down to all levels of Saudi society. This has impacted on wider cultural and social attitudes, including attitudes towards work and entrepreneurship.

Auty (2001) argues that the oil boom has allowed the state to play the role of 'Santa Claus' to Saudi society, resulting in negligible outcome values from investment in social and educational agendas. Effectively, the primary population of KSA rely on the government for access to services related to education, healthcare, utilities and employment to such an extent that they cannot work without the support of the state. Demand for work, as well as many products and services, is mostly influenced by the extent of state expenditure. As large sections of the Saudi population subsequently hold high expectations of the country, this increases dependency on the state, a situation that undermines individual advancement.

According to Baumol (1990), the creation of a particular socio-economic context, encouraged by growth in the oil sector, and the tendency to seek employment in government organisations, has limited the entrepreneurial instincts of many Saudis and reduced the capacity to create jobs and capital through business. This result is described as 'unproductive' or even 'destructive' (Baumol, 1990). Heeks (1998) argues that:

> *'There is a lack of entrepreneurial [ability] to create wealth and jobs to the 'Gulf Disease'. Mimicking earlier examples of excessive reliance on natural resources – notably the 'Dutch Disease', after that was coined to describe the manner in which the discovery of natural gas reserves in the Netherlands in 1950 led to the decline in its industrial competitiveness – the 'Gulf Disease' has hindered the development of a viable Saudi class.'*

Birks and Sinclair identify the KSA dependence on foreign labour as dating back as far as 1982. Moreover, more recently, Dudley (2004, p.100-102) found that the employment opportunities for Saudi Arabians in the private sector organisations were mostly unwelcomed by the country's business owners: 'Employing Saudis

[...] indicates that the firm will have to bear more expenses at less productivity because of higher salaries and fewer working hours for the staff members. This situation is expected to generate more responsibilities and problems for the employees'. However, these are not the only interpretations that exist regarding the economic issues currently faced by the country. Another context to economic development identified by the existing literature is religion. KSA is the spiritual home of the Islamic faith, as Guiso et al. (2002) observe, therefore a development strategy which does not take this into account would be incomplete. Beg (1979) considers that Islam is not a barrier to entrepreneurship, noting that the Islamic faith obliges its followers to serve productively and obtain halal[2] earnings that are beyond immediate needs, for the purpose of distribution within the community and Muslim Ummah[3]. Similarly, Sadeq (1997) cites Islamic texts to support the contention that entrepreneurship is well regarded in Islam.

Weber (1963), however, argues that Islam displays characteristics that hinder development, a position subsequently supported by Perkins (2003): It is a fact that Islam serves as a pertinent hindrance to the growth, prosperity and welfare of the humans along with the fulfilment of their ambitions. 'There is no doubt that Islam is an economic hindrance and barrier to prosperity and fulfillment of human ambition, potential and welfare' (Perkins, 2003). This view is based on what these writers call the absence of sufficient levels of progressive thinking and attitudes towards prosperity. Their findings are contradicted by a number of Western scholars who point out the Islamic tradition of involvement in trading and in productive business activity.

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[2] Any action or object which is permissible to use or engage in according to Islamic law.
[3] The word *Ummah* is an Arabic word referring to "people", more specifically to Muslims who share common ideology and culture.

Any discussion about the impact of religion on Saudi economic development inevitably leads to a debate on Saudi attitudes towards modernisation and development. This effectively divides them into separate camps: 'reformists' who advocate change and development; and 'conservatives', who do not believe in change and modernisation, or, as they often view it, 'Westernisation'. The former camp is made up of entrepreneurs, technocrats and students pursuing qualifications from Western universities, together with the prosperous members of the Royal family. In an examination of royal entrepreneurship in KSA, Sabri (2001) concluded that the ruling family participates in the economic development of the country to a large extent. This is because, whether directly or indirectly, they own a significant proportion of the private sector, and have the power to influence its direction.

So-called 'fundamentalists' or 'traditionalists', however, are generally thought to constitute the majority of the Saudi population. Their position is to question the objectives of modernisation and largely reject its imposition. Pessimistic attitudes towards reform usually prevail among the unqualified population of KSA, although the potential to change such attitudes through education is nonetheless acknowledged. Moreover, the idea of dividing opinion into two distinct camps is also questioned. Some Saudis who were qualified to the graduate level are reluctant to endorse Western modernisation fully because it does not fulfil the principles of Islam. Likewise, divisions within decision makers between 'modernisers' and 'traditionalists' are not straightforward (Sabri, 2001).

Al Muqbili (2004, p.20) showed that 56% of Saudi job seekers expressed a preference for public sector employment, even when pay and other benefits were

less generous than those offered by the private sector. This suggests not only dependence on the state but widespread suspicion of private sector benefits. Birks and Sinclair (1982) noted that the oil boom has generated another weakness: reliance on overseas workers, which is symptomatic of a lack of economic preparedness. Auty (2001) links poor domestic employment participation with a failing education system, which does not encourage or support young Saudis to tackle the demands of the global economy.

The failing education system cannot be explained away by a lack of investment; the state continues to lavish huge sums on education. In fact, KSA is making marked progress in terms of literacy, enrolled students, graduates and institutions, but it is of vital importance to question whether this has led to success in the creation of a qualified, motivated workforce. Attention, therefore, needs to be paid not only to physical infrastructure but also to the quality of and approach to education.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter considered the key contexts of the Saudi reform programme. In doing so, the aim was to highlight why projects such as KASP have been regarded as an economic necessity for the Saudi state. Several contexts were noted. The overriding issue, which can be seen to represent a framework for the whole reform project, has been the advent of globalisation. This chapter summarised the main features of the debate around the impact of globalisation and, notably, its impact on the Saudi economy and the wider Gulf region. As with other countries facing the challenges of a changing global economy, a consensus emerges that suggests there are opportunities as well as pitfalls associated with

globalisation: the former in terms of the potential new markets open to economies that are able to adapt and develop their economic base; the latter in terms of the specific tensions within Saudi society, particularly religious and cultural issues, including the role of women and debates between so-called 'traditionalists' and 'modernisers'.

Outside of these tensions, the pressures of reform continue to weigh on the Saudi state. The traditional source of Saudi wealth, its oil industry, is declining. Saudi policymakers have acknowledged that this is forcing an urgent need to develop and effectively implement alternative strategies. The overreliance on an overseas expatriate workforce to cover the skills gap brought about by a poorly trained domestic source of labour further demonstrates the need for reform. The growing Saudi population only adds to the pressure.

Having noted the factors that are expediting the need for the development of a reform agenda, the next chapter will consider development options, most notably, the concept of human capital – a key reference point for Saudi policy-makers.

Chapter Two

Human Capital

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter noted the challenges facing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a result of over-reliance on a single commodity, oil, and the pressures associated with the onset of globalisation. This chapter will consider how countries such as KSA are looking to maintain their competitive position in the global economic sphere through the promotion of a knowledge-based economy, supported by technological advancement and innovation. An important part of this process is an increased consensus that future economic and productive gains will be dependent on individuals developing increased skills, knowledge and specific workplace competencies. These will enhance the performance and growth of the country's economy. Another way to consider this is that the people of a country are themselves potentially valuable assets to be nurtured and utilised. This brings us to the concept of human capital (HC).

Human capital has been regarded as the key driver for bringing economic growth onto the right track, particularly in the developing nations. With the expansion of the young population and the blossoming of the knowledge-based sector, human capital is thought to be making a significant contribution to the economic growth of many countries (Osipian, 2009). This chapter will offer an overview of these and other main claims about human capital.

The main purpose of this chapter is to consider the key research question of this thesis, as it relates to whether the Saudi KASP is a successful investment in

human capital. Therefore, it is necessary at the outset to make clear what is meant by the concept of human capital and, accordingly, the chapter will introduce what is meant by the concept in terms of a broadly agreed definition. It will then go on to note what impact human capital is said to have in terms of economic growth, performance and development, and how the literature claims that human capital outcomes can be measured.

This chapter will also consider how human capital projects can be judged, and the yardsticks that have so far contributed to this field of study. Ultimately, it will be against these yardsticks that judgments will be made as to the effectiveness of Saudi-led projects, such as KASP. However, reaching an agreed position on measurement and impact of human capital is problematic.

The chapter will also look at existing Saudi attempts to address human capital concerns. Largely, this will be considered contextually, but this chapter will begin to engage directly with the themes set out by the literature, in advance of preparation, collection and analysis of the actual data in subsequent chapters. For example, it will be noted that for some in this field, enrolment in educational or training projects is a key component both in terms of measuring whether human capital is being undertaken, but also its impact. Saudi policymakers appear to be following this to the letter through huge investments in educational spending, infrastructure, enrolment and female participation. However, it will be noted in conclusion that this leaves open the question of whether or not such interventions are effective in the Saudi case. It is to that question this thesis hopes to provide an answer.

2.2 Human Capital

The term human capital was introduced by Theodore Schultz for the first time in his work on economic practices and their relationship with education. Though it is certain that people obtain essential skills and knowledge, it is not essential that such knowledge and skills serve as capital, which can play a substantial role in the deliberate investment that has been developed in the Western economies at a rate much faster than the conventional capital. Such growth is a distinct feature of the economic system (Schultz 1961, p. 29).

In the view of Osipian (2009), human capital is understood to be the amalgamation of the wisdom, judgment, training, intelligence, experience, abilities, skills, talents and knowledge possessed by an individual. The aggregated economic view can be gained with human capital as a social indicator by capturing the psychological, cultural, biological and social complexity that interact in economic transactions. Investment in the development of human capital has been explicitly linked to education and human capital's contribution to productivity growth and economic development can be used for justifying subsidised government provision of education and training for job skills.

There is general agreement across the literature on a broad definition of the term 'human capital'. Taking Schultz as a starting point, the term commonly refers to a positive or favourable link between the development of formal education and training at both state or business levels, and subsequent effects on the organisation and productive performance. Each time that an individual acquires a new skill, they can be said to be building up their 'stock' of human capital (Marimuthu, Arokiasami and Ismail, 2009, p.16). These skills can be added to

subsequent stages. Dess and Picken (2000, p. 8) note that human capital is primarily believed to include the capabilities, skills, knowledge and experience of an individual as an employee or manager of a company, as they are essential for the assigned task, along with their capability to increase the store of knowledge, skills and experience with the help of individual learning.

In essence, as Savvides and Stengos (2008) stated, the potential of human capital can be realised mostly through the presence of the skills and competencies required for a particular task. The productivity of an organisation is closely related to the effectiveness of the hired human capital, which ranges from high to low level employees. It is also necessary that the human capital skills are enhanced and honed on a frequent basis, so that the evolving requirements of the organisation and the customers can be addressed in an efficient manner.

Marthur (1999, p. 205) notes that the concept encompasses the gathered set of skills and abilities and exhibits itself in the educated and skilled workforce of the region. The prominence of human capital in discussions about the overall performance of countries in terms of growth and development is such that Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008, p.157-162) claim: 'human capital theory is the conceptual and theoretical framework that is primarily responsible for adopting the policies related to education and development'.

According to Dobson (2013), measurement of the relationship between human capital and economic growth can also be undertaken by assessing the degree to which investments have been made in providing quality education to the people. In this essence, there are various initiatives taken by the Saudi government that help in offering higher education to the people at minimal or no cost. Such

initiatives have been very helpful in retaining the skills and talent within the country and realising the fact that education plays a crucial role in ensuring the economic growth of a country.

In practical terms, this leads to an emphasis on skills and talents delivered across educational enrolment, such as primary education and the subsequent secondary and tertiary learning, and vocational training. Alani and Isola (2009) argue that investment in compulsory education, coupled with services such as on-the-job training and adult education, develops the capacity of individuals to make more productive economic contributions. In this respect, formal or compulsory education is considered the most significant in terms of bringing about the necessary foundation for human capital strategies to develop. In short, educational programmes offered in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors are essential building blocks towards the future integration of people into the workforce.

Joshua (2015) stated that providing quality education leads to establishing the basic necessary skills and competencies that can lead to desirable economic performance. Other than this, the quality education provided at each phase also fulfils the requirement for identifying the talent and providing the necessary training towards realising the full potential. People trained in the early stage hone their skills in the specific area of interest, which further helps them in aligning their strengths with the required workforce domain.

In a strictly economic context, Schultz (1993, p. 694-734) describes human capital as a crucial component involved in improving the assets of a firm and employees for increasing productivity, along with maintenance of the

competitive advantage. Similarly, Romer (1990, p.71–102) suggests human capital is a primary source of productivity. Rosen (1999) also focuses on the potential for the individual, seeing human capital as the investment made by the people by increasing their productivity. Sheffrin (2003, p 471) further describes human capital as the set of skills and abilities that enable labour to produce economic value. This broad approach is also upheld by Frank and Bernanke (2007) who comment that a combination of key factors such as experience, education, intelligence, work habits, energy, trustworthiness and initiative influence the value of the marginal product of a worker. Similarly, Rodriguez and Loomis (2007) note that factors such as skills, knowledge, competencies and attributes enable the development of personal, economic and social well-being of individuals from a societal perspective.

However, problems regarding human capital can be well understood with the help of the concept of human capital flight. This concept refers to the migration of talented and skilful people from one country to another, so as to find better job or career prospects (Leonard, 2005). This greatly affects the host country in an adverse manner wherein the investment made by the host country is capitalised on by the country where the talent has migrated. This has led to an increasing need to structure the human capital according to the needs of the job market so that talent is not lost. To mitigate such repercussions, a linkage between education and the requirements associated with the labour market has been recognised and established. In order to prevent the loss of investment in human capital programmes in KSA, in the later stages of KASP, the student has to sign a contract for a future job with one of a number of leading companies and institutes, such as SABIC, Saudi airlines and others, then obtain approval to join

the scholarship programme 'Your career your scholarship' (Monitor ICEF February 2016).[4]

In summary, human capital refers to the relationship that exists between education and training and how people contribute or add value to skills in the workplace. Human capital can encompass various techniques, from baseline 'man management' techniques to more direct and intentional training projects, and compulsory education at all levels.

Identifying the meaning of the term human capital is relatively straightforward. However, it is more complicated to achieve agreement on the ethical and economic impact of considering knowledge against skills, at both country and company level. This is due to the fact that the degree of economic growth can be linked to the effectiveness of the human capital, rather than the number of the population. In essence, the human capital is trained and managed to ensure their contribution to economic growth. Education plays a critical role in realising and utilising the full potential of the human capital, which can prove to be beneficial for economic growth so that a nation can ensure successful diversification (Becker and Lewis, 2013).

2.2.1 Economic Performance and Growth

The real impact of human capital on economic performance is less straightforward than is implied by the broad consensus on definitions of the term. In other words, whilst defining human capital is relatively straightforward, establishing its practical benefits or outputs is less so. The first debate regards

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[4] http://monitor.icef.com/2016/02/report-saudi-scholarship-programme-to-sharpenfocus-on-top-universities/ [Accessed: 27/3/2016]

the relative merits of physical capital – investment in plants, machinery and technology and so on – in comparison to human capital. Frank (1984) argues that any economy can sustain and flourish only if it is supported by tangible assets such as land, factories and equipment. Traditionally, whilst attention had always been given to worker value, investment in equipment was thought to be more beneficial for businesses than investment in human capital (Frank, 1984).

There are also many studies that highlight the importance of education for the growth of the economy. For example, Benhabib and Spiegel (1994) considered the development of human capital as an important source of economic growth. They found that reliance on the manufacturing sector required investment in tangible assets, which sidelined the development of individual skills and competencies. Over time, the boom experienced by the service-based industry has brought to light the importance of quality education from the early stages so that students can be prepared to contribute to the economic growth after becoming a part of the labour force. In addition to this, the individuals and not tangible resources can address the requirement for innovation in every sector.

For Becker, however, physical capital refers to a relatively small part of the growth in income in the main countries (1964, p. 1). This is not to suggest that human capital gains are straightforward to demonstrate (see below). However, support for human capital gains, mainly through education, is endorsed by a range of empirical studies (Hanuschek and Kimko, 2000; Psacharopoulos, 1973). Thus, Ashton and Green (1996) have undertaken a critical evaluation of what they term the 'low-skill route' of development, where they found there to be little formal training off the job. With education and training forming a central part of

economic policy-making, Ashton and Green explain the importance of the consensus emerging towards the end of the twentieth-century among policymakers, scholarly writers and in popular feeling. It is becoming a key feature of the struggle for economic superiority.

Nerdrum and Erikson (2001, p. 127-135) note that an 'earnings gap' develops between individuals who have access to human capital based programmes and those that have not had formal human capital interventions. In other words, individuals that invest in training and education schemes will increase their skill sets and subsequently be more productive throughout their working life. Significantly, human capital 'graduates' can provide justification for higher salary demands as a result of their enrolment in such programmes. Romer (1990) concurs suggesting that a primary benefit of human capital directed projects is the resulting transferability of an individual's skills to other individuals, goods and services. Put another way, plants and machinery can quickly become out-dated and require additional investment for renewal, replacement and refurbishment.

Skills learned via human capital techniques have greater medium to long-term potential and value. With the rise in collaboration in projects, the skills and competencies are easily transferable to other employees. It has also led to the emergence of the concept of knowledge retention, which has also become highly necessary so that the knowledge gained from the training and experience of employees is retained by the organisations.

Andersen and Molander (2003) argued that the only downside of human capital, as compared to physical assets such as machinery and tools, lies in the cost

related to the adjustment and adaptation. The assembly of tangible assets in the workplace is easier and simpler when compared to making sure that human capital is well adjusted within the work environment. For this purpose, change management programmes and training sessions are also undertaken that facilitate the smooth transition and collaboration of human capital within organisations. Furthemore, the incentives and appraisals provided to employees to ensure that they are motivated and directed towards the organisational goals also add to the cost associated with human capital.

However, this positive perception of the inevitability of productivity and financial gains produced by graduates of human capital programmes is contested. Becker and Gerhart (1996) consider whether it is human capital outcomes that lead to increased worker performance, or whether firms that invest in such projects do so because they already have sufficient resources, thereby explaining the apparent gains. Here, they use the example of 'profit sharing' as the investment made in the workforce, as an inducement to better worker productivity:

> *'As profit sharing is related to higher profits, it can be interpreted that profit sharing leads to higher profits or the firms having higher profits have a higher potential to implement profit sharing. Nevertheless, in case, it is demonstrated that the employees in the organisations with profit sharing have diverse attitudes in comparison to the firms having no profit sharing.' (Becker and Gerhart, 1996, p. 793)*

Becker and Gerhart (1996) go on to question that if it is really the case that investment in human capital is preferable and represents 'best practice', how can it be that firms that do not invest in such programmes still retain high profitability? This suggests that expectations of profitability and increased productivity via human capital programmes must be considered.

To broaden the outlook from the impact of human capital on individual firms to their impact at a state and national level, data produced by Baldacci et al. (2004) demonstrates that, over a 25-year period, from 1975, a 'positive relationship' was seen between those developing countries that invested significantly in educational schemes and their later economic performance. They concluded that in low-income countries the effect of education on growth is more prominent as there is an increase of 0.1% in per capita GDP growth with the increase in 1% of composite enrolment rate. The effect is 1.5 times greater compared to the middle-income countries (Baldacci et al., 2004, p. 16).

According to Becker, Murphy and Tamura (1990), the overall company profit deriving from investments in human capital increases. In other words, a virtuous cycle opens up, where investment in human capital is advanced and general business profitability is increased. This is because sectors which produce consumable goods and physical capital, use less educated and skilled inputs than education and other sectors that produce human capital (Becker, Murphy, and Tamura, 1990, p. 13).

In the views of Becker, Murphy, and Tamura (1990), productivity and technological advances are also factors that stimulate broader economic growth in terms of GDP. Again, a virtuous cycle ensues whereby investment in human capital increases productivity that, in turn, provides the resources for further investments in new technologies that, in turn, stimulates education and research and development sectors. In short, this makes the human capital a primary factor in economic growth.

This view is supported by Miller and Upadhyay (2000, p.402) who presented data across 83 countries, concluding that involving human capital in the production function creates a significant impact on the output. Human capital lowers the flexibility of output in association with labour. In other words, human capital and economic growth show a positive relationship between them. This positive relationship is depicted in the inclination of the individuals to contribute to their native country's economic growth after gaining quality and the desired education within the country. Diversifying ensures this, as does broadening the career and education-related prospects for the students, so that they get all the desirable options within their native country and can contribute to its economic growth.

Levine, Renault and Esfahani (1991, p.93-116) presented data from 30 semi-industrialised countries, examining the impact of educational and training projects on GDP, concluding that without utilising the educated workers, the productivity of the export sector cannot be increased. In this case, it is the contribution of human capital interventions to the export sector that is considered the beneficial factor in overall GDP growth. According to Ballot et al. (2001), 'value added' profit is directly influenced by the human capital programmes, whether through the increased productivity of educated workers or due to organisational and decision-making processes that are more efficient. Educated and trained workers can informally train others by virtue of example or advanced verbal skills.

2.2.2 Measuring Human Capital

Again, whilst defining human capital in broad terms is relatively straightforward, measuring its impact requires a more precise definition. As noted above, a

broadly accepted measure of assessing the impact of human capital focuses directly on demonstrable economic impact, the so-called 'added value' of human capital interventions. Other approaches to measurement place less emphasis on financial indicators and instead focus on participation rates and qualifications.

As per Guest (2000, p.4), a stakeholder approach is used to signify the attitude and behaviour of an employee; it describes the internal performance of an organisation such as quality of goods and services and reflects external aspects such as sales and financial performance. To conduct the research for providing a guide to policy and practice, it is necessary to gather the data related to outcomes that expand beyond a narrow classification of business performance characterised only by financial indicators.

The stakeholder approach is regarded to be fair and unbiased in nature as it takes into consideration all the related elements that can assess the effectiveness of the involved human capital. However, adoption of statistical analysis for measuring the intangible resources is associated with certain limitations. This approach does not take into consideration the internal management issues and the information regarding the external market to assess the adequate withstanding of the organisation. In addition to this, the individual contribution of employees is also overlooked as the overall productivity is given due consideration.

Barro (1991) and Barro and Lee (1993) assessed the impact of human capital through noting school enrolment rates as a borderline measurement. This process will reveal the total stock of a country in terms of potential human capital. The implication is clear: countries that do not treat education as a priority are less likely to develop well in terms of human capital potential. Those that do

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prioritise education are more likely to establish the core materials necessary for the successful realisation of human capital impacts. This approach is also efficient in gaining knowledge regarding the educational and academic structure that is followed in the country, and the alterations that can be made to enhance the educational opportunities provided to the students. However, this analysis leads to the overall assessment of the enrolments raised in the educational institutions, which can lead to overlooking the gender-wise enrolment (Baron and Armstrong, 2007).

Nehru, Swanson and Dubey (1993) accepted this basic premise but took it a stage further by actually analysing student attainment or performance. They noted the 'accumulated years of education'; where the assumption made was that the total stock of human capital can be represented as the sum of the total of an individual's years of education. Psacharopoulos and Arriagada (1986) attempted something similar, arguing that the stock of human capital can be evaluated by taking an average of the years of education. The claim is that there is a direct relation between productivity and the average years of educational enrolment of an individual. At its most straightforward, their theory is that a person's productivity is directly related to their schooling, so that an individual who has enjoyed twelve years of schooling is likely to be twelve times more productive than someone with one year's schooling.

The work of Romer (1990) was directed towards evaluating the ratio of the skilled adults with respect to the total adults in order to measure the human capital. The OECD (2000) presents a list of necessary requirements for those countries seeking to implement human capital projects. These include high-level

qualifications, growth in university-level qualifications, graduation and enrolment rates, tertiary education entry rates, data showing a comparison between the entry rates at tertiary education and the population leaving higher education before completing it. The list also includes education duration, instruction time per year, the number of hours spent per week on self-study, education expenditure, the percentage of GDP devoted to educational institutions, private and public expenses, core services expenses, ancillary services, research and development, variation in numbers of students and demographic forecasts. (OECD, 2000).

Lall's (1999) studies examined human capital formation. In developing countries, the training and educational requirements were assessed by the enrolment data from tertiary institutions of learning according to changes in terms of competitiveness and technology. Lall took data from 120 countries to provide an assessment of current human capital formation. Lee (1996) employed a similar method, but specifically focused on the fields of engineering and life sciences. By identifying skills gaps in these areas, the study sought to demonstrate ways in which increased economic growth could be facilitated. This approach or method aimed to determine and provide a reading of the current skills and competencies of the domestic workforce and to suggest how any skills gaps could be redressed. According to Spence (1973), education demonstrates the market scenario by indicating the potential productivity of workers. At a lower cost, better education can provide skilled and trained workers for specific jobs.

In the views of Carneiro and Heckman (2003, p.75), the promotion of human capital takes into consideration the families of the students and the schools. They

stress that the lifecycle stream needs to be assessed carefully for the benefit of human capital, teacher matter and household income, as this is as important as education in schools. This promotional strategy brings the calibre of the teachers under the radar, which also helps in increasing the level of education, thereby ensuring quality teaching. Other than this, the low-income group is also considered and given the opportunity to become a part of the education system so that their talent and potential can be utilised for their personal, as well as economic, growth (Baron and Armstrong, 2007).

The literature is, however, critical of claiming a direct link between educational enrolment, or even attainment, and employability, or increased productivity arising naturally from such a background. Winkler (1987) takes the view that, in fact, human capital investment rarely influences output. It is just as feasible to point to other non-human capital strategies as contributing factors. This approach challenges the view that it is possible to identify and accurately measure human capital gains.

There is another subtler critique of existing pro-human capital claims. This perspective states that mainstream evaluations of the impact of human capital projects are too financially or economically based in terms of growth strategies. This point of view suggests non-monetary advantages need to be better factored in. These might include networking, motivation, and creativity and so on. This approach has arisen due to the requirement in the domain of innovation in every sector for ensuring a sustainable competitive advantage over other existing players. It has also been determined that the academic performance of an

individual does not define the level of creativity he or she can exhibit and therefore contribute to economic performance.

Coleman (1988) suggested that a person's knowledge and skills could be increased significantly through family or other social interactions, without formal state or company interventions. He highlighted the differences between the concepts of social capital and human capital but showed how both are linked to economics. His study illustrated the importance of social capital in creating the human capital of the next generation. Self-confidence in expressing one's own opinion, intelligence and emotional attitude enables young learners to become better learners and to be successful in their education and in their society. Blundell et al. (1999) argued that human capital produced by real education is able to increase economic growth and individual income. They explain that human capital investment is expensive, but is an asset that increases national growth and should be supported by the government. The networks that are not well structured lead to the promotion of interactions that are restricted and focused inwardly. Shared values that are based on collective endeavour and individual worth are likely to result in well-being, positivity and productivity.

2.3 Engaging with the Literature

A review of the literature on human capital shows the prominence of several themes. In terms of relating such themes to the main research topic of the thesis – whether investment in human capital projects such as KASP is successful – it is the themes that claim impact from human capital projects that appear to be the most relevant. Stevens and Weale (2003) note the enormous rise in living standards over the last millennium as a result of education. In advanced societies,

it becomes difficult to function for those with limited education. Education is an important means by which countries make good use of existing technology; returns on education diminish as levels of development do likewise.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has one of the world's fastest growing populations; its numbers are expected to more than double by 2025. The Kingdom is still in a state of transition from its traditional, agrarian past to a modern future. Over the previous three decades, KSA has changed economically, socially and demographically. In the past, the country never felt the need to adopt a diversified approach to ensure economic growth due to its unparalleled dependency on the oil sector, which enabled it to ensure an adequate amount of revenue. However, with the advent of globalisation, the transition to being a developed nation with a secure and identifiable position on the world map, meant that KSA has a need to adopt a more diversified approach.

KSA appears to be a highly relevant case study for engaging with the key concepts of human capital. The previous chapter identified over-reliance on oil as a key issue necessitating reform. Demographics could be added to that. Demographic pressures are also building (UN 2001, 2010). As previously mentioned, the Saudi population is expected to increase more than 35% over the following decade from a figure of more than 27 million in 2010. This will entail enormous levels of domestic demand, which current oil revenue projections will not be able to meet.

What comes across in some of the literature is that by engaging simply with human capital as a theme, a country can make an advance or step in the right direction. Some researchers, for example, stress enrolment as a benefit in itself, but for others an actual measurement of progress is necessary. On this baseline

assumption, KSA can claim to be acting constructively, certainly rhetorically. According to Dr Abdul Wahed al-Humaid, to take the economy to a higher level with respect to productivity, technology and jobs that are independent of oil have to be created. 'We have to create jobs and to shift the economy into a higher level of productivity, more technology and knowledge-driven and less dependent on oil' (Quoted in Burke, the Guardian, 2011,). Here is an acknowledgement that there is a problem with an over-reliance on a natural resource – oil – and that there is a real need for the country to adopt alternative strategies. More than that, the Minister specifically references a 'knowledge-driven' approach. This is the language used in the definitions identifying human capital as a concept. According to Amr Al-Dabbagh, Governor of the KSA General Investment Authority, human capital is the biggest problem faced by KSA.

A problem cannot be addressed until it is acknowledged. It would seem that Saudi policymakers are at least prepared to accept that a need for a reform programme exists. This appears to demonstrate that this thesis is engaging with a topic that the country's rulers have acknowledged as a key factor in the country's development. Equally significantly, they have identified education and training as key components of such a project. For the purposes of this thesis, this is another important engagement with a key theme of the human capital literature. With this approach adopted by the policymakers, it has been made evident that the country is focused towards the retention of talent by providing them with an adequate platform to hone their skills and opportunities to utilise them. The realisation of the importance of human capital has also led to its inclusion in projects pertaining to economic growth in the most comprehensive way possible.

Indeed, when applying the themes of the literature to the Saudi example in broad terms, further apparently encouraging developments can be noted. The literature claims that investment in education is a key requirement in any commitment to human capital. Clearly, the Saudi government has massively invested in the educational sector over the last decade. The government has founded eight new universities, for a total of twenty-five high capacity state universities, and established a knowledge-based research and application university named KAUST University.

Moreover, the government is focusing on education and the country's skills base in terms of total output spending. After defence, education spending is now second in the Kingdom's annual budget. Investment in Saudi higher education is significant as a basic form of human capital. Over a quarter of Saudi Arabia's GDP per year is spent on the provision of education, one of the highest investment strategies in the world. A huge building programme of schools, technical colleges and higher education institutions has commenced. Thus, a significant investment is made in human capital and the training of the Saudi population to serve and enhance Saudi economic growth. In order to achieve this and impart intellectual wealth in the people, the country has invested a tremendous amount in this sector.

In 2008, 25% of the country's total budget, which equals SAR (Saudi Riyals) 105 billion, was invested in education and the development of the nation's labour force. The country is also investing large sums into vocational and technical training programmes. In addition to this, the King initiated a programme, the King Abdullah Project for the Development of Public Education, which

overhauled the public education system. Initially, a sum of $3.1 billion was invested in the project, which was divided into a number of stages. Never before in the history of KSA have such huge investments been made in the development and enhancement of human capital. As noted, some of the human capital literature stresses investment and enrolment as key markers in assessing whether states are applying human capital techniques and, for some, as a measurement of outputs or impact.

Furthermore, KSA has made education compulsory from age six to seventeen. The authorities are also approaching and regenerating institutes for teacher training, curriculum development and extracurricular expertise (Rosen, 1972). The investment in training and education programmes aims to provide companies with a competent, highly qualified and talented workforce that is capable of supporting businesses to achieve success in global markets and to augment national growth. KSA is taking various measures to build a highly talented workforce for current commercial projects. King Abdullah launched (CADRE), a human resource development and innovation institution that acts as a recruiting engine to support industries to match the right people to the right jobs. CADRE is responsible for planning and executing comprehensive human capital strategies for the regions of KSA. It is providing a national workforce with specific skill sets that drive the economies of cities towards the path of growth and prosperity (Saudi Gazette, 2013).

Some broad data is available to demonstrate the progress being made. The literacy rate of the nation has improved from 33% in 1970 to 91% today. This is mainly due to heavy investment in building schools and universities, and teacher

recruitment programmes. Generally, enrolment rates at secondary and tertiary levels have improved strongly in the Arab World. In addition to this, numbers in the female workforce have now surpassed the numbers of male workers. By 2007, the Development of Public Education project introduced by King Abdullah was expected to have distributed SAR 12 billion over five years, as part of the new education strategy. It encompassed four key areas: teacher training, improvement of the public school system and overall environment, extracurricular or vocational activities, and curriculum development (Education, 2014).

All the factors outlined by King Abdullah are directed towards achieving a better educational system wherein the students can attain a quality education. With the ever-evolving knowledge base and technologies, the educational institutes also make sure that the teachers are well equipped with competencies and information so that they can ensure quality teaching. Further, the public education system takes into consideration the students who are inclined towards shaping a career irrespective of background and financial status. Since the academic knowledge and theoretical structure of the studies are required to be backed up with extracurricular activities, the university initiates tasks that lead to honing the inbuilt talent of the students. Also, to gain a position on the global platform, the university has also ensured that the development of the curriculum is not based on its internal environment but on international standards. These standards also lead to preparing the students to be competitive in the global environment and not just within the country's boundaries (Sirageldin, 2002).

The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) was also introduced to play a significant role in the future competitiveness of KSA. Its main aim was to yield long-term improvements in the nation's ability to provide business conglomerates with talented and high-quality human resources. Additionally, it ensures that the nation can train as well as retain the coming generation of engineers and scientists (Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, 2014). This initiative facilitates students and employees of the country to contribute to the economic development of their native nation instead of going overseas for better opportunities. The university has also directed its efforts towards the establishment of a more human capital-oriented education structure, so that students can be prepared according to their domain of expertise and potential.

The government of KSA invested a further SAR 204 billion, in order to enhance education, in 2013. Human capital investment appears to have become the main concern of the Saudi government. Spending on training, education and skill development has tripled since 2000. Moreover, the government has opened large numbers of schools and universities and more are already under construction. GESS (Gulf Educational Supplies and Solutions) and GEF (Global Education Forum) have become essential platforms for sharing best global practices in technological advancements as well as educational reforms. The Smart Learning Initiative has also been launched as part of the UAE Vision 2021, which attempts to shape new education and learning environments in public schools. Through this initiative, smart classes provide each student with an e-tablet. This enhances the quality and delivery of learning and instruction in the public education sector

(Nasser, 2012). It is thus considered to be an important component in creating a knowledge-based economy.

If a key theme of the literature on human capital is the best use of all human resources available to a country, then the issue of female participation must be addressed. In the eighth five-year development plan (2005-2009), the government initiated a programme to provide more opportunities for Saudi women by creating more employment for them. In 2007, one-third of government jobs were reserved for women and additional opportunities were set up for them. Existing higher education institutions opened up more degrees to women, which had previously been restricted to men while the establishment of new universities opened more doors. In October 2007, KAUST was opened, denoting an important step in the country's educational reforms. The university adopted the co-education of men and women, highlighting the determination of the authorities to make a major breakthrough in a conservative society that has always maintained very strict traditions of segregation between men and women in the workplace and at social gatherings. The project was also considered to be an acknowledgement of the problem facing KSA and the Arab world in training new generations in the fields of science and technology.

Of course, rhetorical commitments to reform and investment, even on a massive scale, are no guarantees in themselves of success. Even then, in the context of the literature regarding KSA, it is important not to exaggerate. Taken regionally, education provision is unimpressive when considered in the context of global developments. In 2003, over 64 million Arabs of school age were illiterate, with over 70% represented by women. According to Perkin (2004), education is in

such decline that it cannot make an effective impact on people in the region. Quality at all levels is falling; enrolment of young people in school has also declined since the 1980s. Government spending on education in the last two decades has amounted to less than 0.2% of the region's GNP.

Furthermore, in the field of gender inclusion, it is important not to exaggerate. The UNDP (2005) report demonstrates that even though girls perform better than boys, women enjoy little or no opportunities in comparison to men. One in ten Arab women is literate and less than a quarter are employed outside the home, the lowest proportion of all regions in the world (Nimeh, 2010). According to the report presented by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2007), women in rural areas continue to play a major role in the Saudi workforce, but due to the lack of education and skills, over one million find themselves unable to enter the labour market. Education of Saudi girls is based on traditional norms and limited subjects. To exclude 50% of the population from contributing to the economy undoubtedly limits the potential for economic growth and the benefits it brings. This would fail the tests set by exponents of human capital reviewed in the literature.

Saudi policymakers might well be taking the idea of higher and vocational education for women more seriously. However, women are still not completely admitted to major fields such as engineering, law, political science, petroleum and pharmacology. However, under the reforms taking place, they are taking the opportunity to study these fields abroad. For knowledge-based economic development, there is a clear lack of training in subject areas which play a major role in development. These subjects are mathematics, science and technology and

computer science. It also needs to be stressed that there remain societal objections towards the idea of allowing genders to mix in educational institutions and the workplace.

This shows that to eradicate the issue pertaining to the education system in the country, the focus should be laid on other factors, such as the involvement of students in educational institutions based on their gender. The issue of gender segregation has restricted the development of the educational system of the country on the global platform. However, several reforms have been taken to ensure that the ratio of males and females enrolled in the education system is balanced, but as compared to other developed nations, KSA lags behind to a great extent (Yahya and Kaur, 2010).

It is important not to exaggerate the economic impact of reforms undertaken to date. Average annual growth in the region is about 0.51%, low even in comparison to sub-Saharan Africa. East Asia, by contrast, enjoys an average annual growth of 5%. During the first decade of the new century, regional exports grew by only 1.5%, about 4.6% less than the average for the rest of the world. High unemployment rates and very low productivity levels provide further reminders of the impact of corruption in the region (Whitaker, 2009).

In a general sense, additional problems exist that need to be addressed in the context of the literature review. The spread of nepotism in the region is very high, due to the strength and control which family forces continue to enjoy (Abed, 2003). Roles and positions are transferred from one family member to another, even when the successor lacks the necessary skills to perform the role. Many

Arabs are now very tolerant of corruption, simply because it has become a normalised aspect of society.

In the field of the private sector, it is possible to refer to more sobering generalised findings. An independent survey conducted by Stephen Wilkins discovered that only 38% of Saudi companies believe that the country has sufficient numbers of competent and qualified individuals in the national labour force, while the majority of firms rely heavily on expatriate recruitment (Wilkins, 2001). The study revealed that one of the biggest challenges for Gulf countries is an insufficient domestic supply of skilled individuals to contribute to the workforce, with the result being a heavy reliance on expatriates. Another major issue posited by a number of CEOs of companies in Gulf countries is that the productivity and efficacy levels of expatriates are superior to those of the national labour force, at all management levels (Barro, 1991).

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter outlined what is meant by human capital and how its application is measured, together with debates about its impact. The chapter further engaged with the main themes of the literature on human capital, from the setting of potential yardsticks to judging Saudi efforts at productive engagement with the concept, and aso looking in broad terms at the current programmes undertaken in this area.

It was noted that reaching an agreement on a general definition of human capital is not particularly problematic. In short, the term claims a beneficial relationship between skills in the workplace and education and training. However, this is where the consensus breaks down. Human capital will – according to some – lead

to positive outcomes in terms of economic growth and performance. To put it at its most straightforward, facilitating and supporting human capital development techniques will create economic benefits. This fact is also backed up with the effectiveness of the human capital that is being enrolled for ensuring the considerable economic growth and performance of the country. The chapter also highlighted various measuring factors for human capital, involving the assessment of their contribution based on financial outputs or on enrolment in educational institutions. However, these methods adopt statistical indicators, which are used for measuring the non-tangible assets of the nation.

Indeed, the literature appears to reveal that for some contributors, financial investment in education and training, together with increased enrolment, is an end in itself. By such criteria, the literature provides some apparently reassuring findings for Saudi policymakers. As the second half of the chapter sets out, KSA has made a massive investment in increasing educational opportunities and improving educational infrastructure. It has rhetorically acknowledged the need to increase the knowledge-led economy; the above investment appears to give credence to this claim. It can also be said that, given the social and cultural restrictions within which any ruling elite has to operate, progress has also been made within KSA in terms of the increased participation of women.

However, problems remain. Enrolment in educational institutes or commitment along with human capital is not sufficient for the required development. There remains some doubt as to whether any such conclusion can be reached. In part, this could be due to the fact that some firms and countries do not appear to be overtly committed to such projects. Of course, an obvious but crucial point that

also needs to be stressed is that enrolment or participation alone can never be enough in terms of a test of credibility. Demonstrable results or improvements have to feature in any assessment. Further, critical engagement with secondary data demonstrates that KSA is still lacking in terms of growth and participation when compared to other countries. In other words, the jury remains out on the effectiveness of the Saudi engagement in this area, which reveals the need for a detailed enquiry and deliberation of a key Saudi reform initiative bounded clearly within the remit of human capital. The methodology detailed in Chapter Four will set out how this thesis seeks to investigate and present such findings.

Chapter Three

Examination of Higher Education Reform as the Main Tool of Human Capital Investment (HCI)

The Case of KSA

3.1 Introduction

These early chapters set out the historical and political context of the thesis. This chapter details the current state of higher education in KSA, in particular: the size of the sector, the nature of the curricula (the concentration on religious studies and the humanities, rather than the natural and the physical sciences), as well as the professional status of its qualifications and their value in the labour market. It also asks why the higher education system fails to provide the skills required in the Saudi labour market and why the country depends on foreigners to fill the gap in highly skilled jobs.

The main focus of this chapter is on the background of the educational system, detailing how it works and what developments have occurred since its establishment. The chapter ends with a brief outline of KASP (the case study of this thesis) and of how the programme is helping Saudi students to achieve skills needed for the labour market in a time of globalisation. The origins of the programme will be assessed, while its key features, rationale and aims will be evaluated. Reference will be made to key primary policy documents and government materials, while interviews with participants in the programme and data analysis will be introduced in the following chapter.

It is important to provide a comprehensive record of how KASP was established and how it operates and to set out the origins and development of the programme. The previous chapter provided a theoretical analysis of the human capital concept and structure and identified the importance of evaluating higher education in terms of the investment process in human capital.

3.1.1 Organisation of State Education in KSA

It is important at this stage to provide a clear picture of state education, where young people in KSA have their educational base. KSA is a monarchy whose constitution builds on the Holy Book, the Quran (Koran), the Prophet Mohammed's sayings and Shariah Law. The King and the Council of Ministers lead the government, which are the executive and administrative bodies, respectively. The social and cultural beliefs, based on the Muslim religion and its identity, define the culture of KSA since it also follows the Muslim faith. Accordingly, the education system in KSA intends to meet the general goals that include the provision of knowledge related to Islamic culture and its related ideas and values, so that students can understand and develop skills, conduct and knowledge that is peculiar to the Islamic culture.

The primacy of religious belief based on Islamic codes of conduct that prevail in every sector, means any interpretation of educational issues in KSA has to take this into account. Islam considers education as a status symbol and both religion and teachings are considered closely linked; the objective of teaching is underpinned by Islamic teachings. This follows through to the organisation of the Saudi education system. All education policies are subject to government control

and approval. This includes the curriculum that is uniformly applied across KSA, as well as the syllabus for each course and textbooks (Al Farsi, 1986).

The modern Saudi state system of education originated in the early 1950s with the formation of the Ministry of Education. Under this Ministry, there exists over forty educational districts that act as links between local schools and the Ministry. Responsibility for the organisation, construction and maintenance of school buildings is also under the control of the Ministry, as well as the supply of textbooks and materials for students. The Ministry retains responsibility for Saudi educational policy and implementation (Ministry of Education, 2004).

In addition to the general goals of Islamic teachings and learning, Saudi's Ministry of Education has extended the vision of education in the 'Ten-year Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education (2004-2014)'. This document has given value to improving and enhancing knowledge and skills that meet the demands of the developing labour market, such as technological advancements and innovations. The focus of the Ministry of Education then, is to make the system of education not only effective, but also practical in terms of developing the knowledge of students in the wider context.

The Ministry of Education plan for development (2010 to 2014) put emphasis on human resource development through strengthening the education system and its related policies. This development plan envisioned the promotion of an education system of an integrated nature, wherein educational professionals and experts added sufficient efforts to build up academic, intellectual, cognitive and creative/innovative skills. The endeavour of the development plan is to enhance the potency or capability as per the requirements of the knowledge society.

It was not until 1957 that the first university not dedicated wholly to religious instruction was opened – Riyadh University – which, in later years, was renamed after King Saud. Formal state education for girls began in 1964 and the Ministry of Higher Education was established by the mid-1970s. The teachings and education programmes given in KSA are not mandatory; however, education has the advantage of being given free of cost and available to all (Sedgwick, 2001).

The Ministry of Education has considerable powers. It takes responsibility for boys' education throughout the Kingdom at elementary and intermediate levels, together with secondary general and vocational training. Another factor to note is that government officers are accountable for providing adult education to the mature person and addressing issues such as adult illiteracy. The Ministry also oversees various colleges of adolescents, colleges having male faculties and colleges giving technical education (World Bank, 2004).

The Ministry also has supervisory powers over education for girls, who undertake the same core curriculum as their male counterparts. Within the Ministry, a General Presidency takes responsibility for junior colleges made for girls and colleges comprising of female faculties across the nation. In addition, the Ministry oversees provision for children of age two to three years encompassing both girls and boys taught together. The programmes aiming to provide education to women are looked after by the authorities present in the Ministry. However, the branches/categories made available for female students are limited (Ministry of Education, 2004).

In a similar manner, the Ministry also supervises private schools, which mainly operate in the major cities. They teach broadly the same curriculum and use the

same textbooks as schools operating in the public sector. The Department of Education is also accountable for 90% of the universities present in the nation, which implies that out of eight universities, the department will take care of seven. The eighth institution, King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM), is taken care of by the Higher Education Council of Ministers (Saudi Arabian Information Resource 2002). The number of universities has increased from this level to 34 universities – 30 governmental and 4 private – during King Abdullah's time.

A separate system under the Ministry is accountable for providing religious education studies guided by two Islamic universities to the students of sixth standard onwards and also the senior secondary students comprising of eleventh and twelfth standard. The purpose of these institutions is to develop future citizens in the nation who understand the significance of Saudi Arabia's religion in their lives (Saudi Arabian Information Resource 2002).

The organisation of the education system in KSA involves common structures including pre-school education, primary education, secondary and higher education. Pre-schools or kindergartens are for children that are three to five years old; these assist them in learning letters and small words along with numbers. Primary education offers basic knowledge to children to develop their cognitive and intellectual skills (World Data on Education, 2011). Secondary education imparts knowledge for the general curriculum, and introduces a chosen field from selections such as management, cultural studies, economics and natural sciences.

3.1.2 Administration of the Education System

In KSA, the Ministry of Education is liable for education at the elementary, intermediate and secondary level. Moreover, adult education, special education and literacy growth are other substantial areas of responsibility under their administration (World Data on Education, 2011).

In addition to this, the Ministry of Higher Education also has responsibilities for administering the education system. In the year 1975, this Ministry was established to look after the operations and management of higher education (World Data on Education, 2011). This level of education is directly associated with career-related skills and job prospects. The focus of the Ministry of Higher Education is on rendering the type of quality education that is required in the labour market. The Ministry is also responsible for supervising and managing the education system at the girls' colleges and teacher training colleges (World Data on Education, 2011).

In the field of higher education, the 'Higher Education Council' is another administrative body which is responsible for the education system at the post-secondary level (World Data on Education, 2011). This authority has supreme power to control educational affairs by practicing strict supervision and coordinating work within institutions. In addition to these roles, the Council of Higher Education supervises the direction of university education, in areas such as the supervision of academic education development and academia coordination. The Council is also tasked with making rules and regulations for improving learning at a higher level. In other words, all the rules and regulations to control higher education are formulated by the Higher Education Council,

which also keeps control over the universities and colleges and supervises their compliance with the defined norms and standards (World Data on Education, 2011).

In addition to these specific responsibilities, the Higher Education Council is accountable for imparting quality education and, thus, it has established 'the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment'. The work of this commission is to scrutinise the quality of education rendered to the students at the post-secondary level and to ensure that the quality of education and support services at institutions of higher education are in compliance with international standards of education and job prospects (World Data on Education, 2011). In order to accomplish this task, the Council considers the mission, learning resources and facilities, employment processes, financial position and community development. Altogether, this administrative unit of education supports improvements in educational quality to meet the gap in the current and expected expertise and knowledge (World Data on Education, 2011).

Another key part of the education system in KSA is under the management of the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation. The key responsibility of this administrative unit is to build an integrated system of training centres and institutions for efficient processing of education. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was earlier responsible for the task of integration. To unify technical and vocational training under one unit, the Council of Ministers issued a Decree in 2005 (World Data on Education, 2011). During the same year, training for females was merged with the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation. Following this announcement in 2007, the General Organisation for Technical

Education and Vocational training was reorganised as 'Technical and Vocational Training Corporation'. In the words of this decree, the main purpose of this corporation became to fulfil the demand for competent human knowledge resources in the labour market through provision of requisite training (World Data on Education, 2011). In the context of education and job opportunities, this council imparts essential training to the people of KSA to increase the availability of national human resources, in order to decrease dependency on foreign workers for fulfilling demands in the job market (World Data on Education, 2011). It can be concluded, that the efforts of the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation are a required initiative to encourage competency and inherent capabilities in the Saudi population; in addition, it is efficient for the country's economy.

Apart from these administrative units for maintaining the education system, some other authorities play a substantial role in managing education in KSA. These are the Saudi National Commission of Childhood, which is responsible for child welfare through dealing with child-related affairs (World Data on Education, 2011). The General Presidency for Girls' Education is another administrative unit that oversees girls' education and literacy to make them competent to meet the national human resources demand. Overall, the education system of KSA has the proper regulatory framework to meet internal standards and labour market demands (World Data on Education, 2011).

3.1.3 Higher Education

Normally, higher education for secondary students lasts four years for humanities and social science subjects and lasts six years in the fields of medicine

and engineering. Some institutions offer distance learning. World Bank statistics reveal that the majority of students in KSA have chosen to study humanities and social sciences. In addition to the fact that the government offices and institutes provide services from the best universities, there are colleges in the private sector and community colleges that have been transformed into universities and colleges for girls. This study will focus on the quality of education rather than quantity of universities and institutions, since quality is what KSA is striving for in the era of globalisation.

3.1.4 Curriculum

After 9/11, the Saudi education system and curriculum came under scrutiny, especially from the USA, and as a result, KASP was established with the support of the Kingdom to examine the Saudi educational curriculum. KASP had two major purposes: to determine how hatred had developed and to update the system of education. This study is about Saudi students studying in a developed environment and learning the skills that will enable them to adapt to a constantly changing world.

The Saudi education curriculum includes all the elements of learning that are prevalent any national education system, such as geography, history, home economics (meant for girls), mathematics, physical education (meant for boys), religious studies and science. The Ministry of Education issues textbooks that establish the curriculum for use in the whole education system, except higher education courses, incorporating those that are not under the direct observation of officers, such as private schools. A textbook is published after being approved

by the Ministry and is distributed, free to students, at the state's expense (UNESCO, 2002).

There is a close correlation between public education at all levels and Islamic teaching. Religion is taught at all levels along with instruction in other subjects. Five areas are covered under religious studies: Qur'an recitation, Qur'an commentary, prophetic sayings, Islamic jurisprudence and monotheism. Below is a representative sample of a Saudi Education policy document (Ministry of Education, 2004):

> *'The motive of learning is to interpret the religion Islam in order to spread the belief in Islam, inculcating values in the student by describing him the instructions to make him familiar with the religion and other skills. The teachings provided are beneficial so as to focus on the cultural development of an individual, which will help in developing society economically stable and reforming the society.'*

The perceived dominance of the teaching of Islam throughout the Saudi education system has led to two forms of criticism. The first is external and centres on the education system as a conduit for extremism, while the second – both internal and external – proposes that a system dominated by religious instruction leaves the country ill-equipped to deal with technological and economic change. The demand for reform has been not just political in nature; it also has an economic dimension, prompted by severe economic problems within the Kingdom.

According to Ihsan Buhulaiga, a Saudi economist, 'it would be least beneficial if the factors such as poverty, unemployment, unstable economic growth and educational level are ignored because the market requires skilled people' (Arab

News, 2004). The 1970s oil boom created opportunities for the Saudi population but, arguably, generated other problems going forward. The oil boom resulted in an elevation in revenue of the nation, which in turn quickly converted rural and tribal societies into urban societies.

The capital generated from the oil business and the huge capital introduced into the economy was able to provide financial help to focus on infrastructure development, which comprised of expansion of services and subsidies (Propok, 2003). However, on a societal level, the oil bonanza created increased expectations of a marked increase in the standard of living, masked in part by welfare subsidies and by the efforts of countless workers of foreign lands filling positions for manual labour, as well as skilled jobs.

The ruling elites provided significant resources to address the issue of economic development. Before 2014, those responsible for setting regulations for the nation, committed $200 billion to increase spending for schools and institutes, including a considerable amount to concentrate on vocational training (Lindsey, 2010). Investment in these areas aimed to improve the supply of a domestic skilled labour force, in order to reduce dependence on overseas workers and reduce unemployment. This was to be done by equipping young students with skills to match the labour market needs; the government's initiatives towards development address this issue.

Perhaps the most significant scheme has been the King Abdullah Project that was launched for general educational development. The SAR 9 billion project was initiated in 2009. The project, to be implemented over a six-year period, aimed to ensure the provision of manpower in the near future. Schools in cities such as

Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam were selected for this project (Wigglesworth, 2011).

In addition to this, the late Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz was appointed to be the chief of a committee to administer a project that aimed to design an environment in the classroom to support the idea of technological advancement in KSA. The training was to be provided to around 400,000 teachers in order to facilitate classes utilising cutting-edge IT. In addition, the project encouraged the development of overall skill sets for students.

These kinds of projects – both economic and educational – suggest that KSA is determined to provide the resources for reform. However, whether this will result in the skills required is more questionable. Will this be an exercise in throwing money at a problem, or has the structure and planning been put in place to aid its success? It would seem evident that more than money is needed to ensure the success of these projects. It is important to implement proper structure and planning in order to attain the aims and objectives.

The issue of the extent and viability of reform is a key question. Post-September 11, the principle of reform itself has been commonly debated. This led to the formation of a group of liberals, progressive Islamists and nationalists, who were focused on bringing change, and providing insight based on a non-violent approach, which is compatible with the religion of Islam and respectful in terms of Al-Saud's unifying role. By this action, the government proposed a plan to enunciate the need for political, social and educational change (Propok, 2003). The government provided direction and funding. It helped in providing funds for National Dialogue sessions, for ensuring local elections, and for setting up a

committee to supervise the syllabus for schools. These actions seemingly signal openness to at least some reform (Doran, 2004). The extent to which these reform intentions are merely rhetorical or actually have substance will be a key question for this study.

The development of human capital or resources – as well as a skilled workforce – has been a stated priority of the Saudi government, and the Kingdom's education or training system has been identified as the means through which to achieve this goal. This is evidenced by the increase in expenditure allotted for this purpose over successive development plans. The First Development Plan (1970-1974) allocated SAR 7 billion to education and training, increasing to SAR 57 billion by the second scheme (1975-1979). Despite an unstable economic context, subsequent development plans maintained expenditure, culminating in over 50% of total expenditure being allocated to human resources by the conclusion of the Fifth Development Plan in 1994. The trend of increasing resources was continued during the Sixth Development Plan (1995-1999) and Seventh Development Plan (2000-2004), where spending in human resources was projected to reach 56.7% of total expenditure (all data Ministry of Planning, 2003).

Increased expenditure on this scale is reflected in increased student enrolment in Saudi educational facilities. From 1970-2002 student numbers increased from just over 500,000 to more than 5 million, averaging 7.3% annual growth as the time passes. From the statement of officers of the planning department (2003), teachers employed at all levels of educational provision increased from just over 23,000 to more than 500,000 over the same timeframe.

A survey organised by the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM, 2003) pointed out the challenges faced by the Saudi pre-university education system. It noted rapid population growth and future demographics that would see the majority of the population, aged below 19, possessing resources dependent on unpredictable oil revenues. Further challenges included the provision of inadequate buildings and facilities and problems of bureaucracy hindering policy implementation. The Seventh Development Plan highlighted the need for innovation in education, but the report questioned whether a system still highly geared towards rote and memorisation was sufficient to meet the objectives set out. Another issue noted was poor teacher training and development. Overall, the study concluded that the Saudi education system was producing outcomes which were not consistent with wider economic needs. Other commentators made similar points, with Al Shammery et al. (2003) noting that the Saudi pre-higher education sector places too much emphasis on literary and religious studies and not enough on scientific and technical education.

The link between higher education and Saudi development plans has been long established (Abdulijawed, 1998). The responsibility for the coordination of higher education policy belongs to the Higher Education Council (SEC), established in 1993. The SEC aims to improve the workings of Saudi education facilities by developing programmes in new areas, encouraging better staff engagement and facilitating increased cooperation across all universities (Al-Dhuwain et al., 2000).

3.1.5 Vocational Training

Vocational training in KSA has its origins in the 1960s, with the creation of vocational training centres. These centres, aimed at training students in mechanical and technological studies, were operational under the guidance of the Department of Labour. These centres set out to give training in line with the development plans and meet the needs of private sector skill requirements, while setting a standardised system of training at all levels (Al-Khateeb, 1998).

The most targeted attempt to meet the manpower and skills requirements of the Saudi economy was the establishment in 1980 of the General Organisation for Technical Education and Vocational Training (GOTEVT). Up to this point, the delivery of training had been controlled by different ministries, but it would now be integrated into one department that assumed responsibility for developing the productivity and performance of national manpower (Ghaban et al., 2002).

GOTEVT set out the following objectives:

1. To prepare and train Saudis to perform vocational and technical works in different sectors.
2. To reduce the number of illiterate Saudi students.
3. To better train teachers.
4. To targeted investment towards vocational training and development.
5. To create a unified education system.
6. To undertake research to establish the needs of the labour market (Al-Khateeb, 1998)

3.2 Challenges

3.2.*1 Structural Changes in the Economy*

Despite its large area, KSA has little arable land. Most of its land mass is desert and it possesses few water resources. Agriculture has been the most heavily favoured sector of the economy since the 1980s and has benefited from large-scale government assistance.

Yet, in spite of all the government-financed infrastructure and direct subsidies, including guaranteed prices for wheat, agricultural production accounted for less than 10% of GDP. The main policy was to encourage wheat production and reduce the country's dependence on imports. As a result of government support and subsidies, in 1991, the country became the world's sixth-largest wheat exporter, with sales abroad amounting to two million tons (Business Intelligence Middle East Staff, 2010)[5]. However, this policy was later abandoned, as it became evident that the cost of domestic wheat production was significantly higher than that of the world's largest producers/exporters. Moreover, production was heavily dependent on spray irrigation from underground water. This has two disadvantages: it is very expensive and also carries with it negative environmental effects, draining the underground water table, which in turn causes atmospheric dryness.

In an age of global competition and rapid change, understanding the response of a particular society towards this demands, more than ever, an appreciation of the human dimension involved. Globalisation and socio-economic development are closely interrelated. The concept of development is much broader than that of

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[5] http://www.bi-me.com/main.php?id=49994&t=1

economic development alone, since economic development refers only to economic growth and its influence on the national per capita income.

Economic growth is generally dependent on changes in the structure of production and employment. The structure of the developed state features key components: technology, which lies at the heart of growth and economic development; demographic and human factor development; population growth, and its impact on economic development. Health and education are also important in the process of development, in particular on the quality of a country's labour force.

Over the past thirty years, KSA has had one of the world's fastest growing populations; furthermore, its numbers are expected to more than double by 2025. The Kingdom is still in a state of transition from its traditional, agrarian past to a modern future. It has seen many severe changes in the last 30 years in terms of economic stability, as well as its social or demographic sector. Nevertheless, the duration of 30 years is a short period for any nation.

With increased awareness of the relationship between socio-economic development and change, the government has become more acutely conscious of the importance of socio-economic development. The factors on which the country is focusing will enable it to achieve standards that are more sophisticated. The government is focusing on education and the country's skills base. As stated previously, after defence, education spending is now second in the Kingdom's annual budget. The quality educational result is currently an important task for the government, with substantial sums being directed towards higher education and vocational learning institutes so as to deliver graduates to satisfy the

demands of the labour market. KSA is characterised by a relatively low participation of females in the workforce: 8.2% of the labour force in the country. Thus, female labour participation is an issue that the government is prioritising. To this end, a plan has been approved comprising nine objectives, in order to create employment opportunities for women (www.cdsi.gov.sa, 2009). Reform should not be taken for granted. Religion acts as a central point in KSA since it is linked to deciding the political rule. The governing party is restricted to acting in accordance with traditional beliefs. Even close allies, such as the United States, cannot set the religious environment.

In comparison to other Middle Eastern countries, labour participation from women in Saudi Arabia is fairly low. For example, the level of female labour participation in UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Malaysia and other Muslim countries is 59%, 42.49%, 36.4%, 34.3% and 46.1%, respectively. The main reason behind the low numbers of women in the workforce in KSA is Saudi law. KSA laws regarding women's participation in the workforce are based on Shariah Law, which guarantees a woman's right to work, but only in an appropriate environment. They are not allowed to mix with the men. Thus, occupation gender segregation is quite common in KSA. Moreover, women are limited to only those jobs that are considered to be feminine and thus have less distinguished positions than men. Thus, it is important for KSA to promote female participation in the workforce to redefine growth and development.

However, after the announcement by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia regarding the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme, it has been shown that women should have more power and a role to play in the country's growth and development. It

has been argued that education will play a key role in uplifting women in the Kingdom. As soon as King Abdullah came to power in 2005, various reforms were taken to improve the status of women in the country (Lacey, 1981). In 2013, 30 women were appointed to the Saudi Shura Council by King Abdullah. The appointment of women to the council was highly appreciated by the Saudi elites and Saudi society and also by the developed societies outside the Kingdom. Most of the women appointed to the council work exceptionally in their domains and are highly educated with degrees in education, science and medicine. In addition to this, women have also started participating in charity organisations (Yamini, 1996). Although up until the present date none of the women council members had been elected as the head of any committees, three of the women council members had succeeded in becoming deputies of their committees.

Several new perspectives have been introduced by the councilwomen's ambitious agendas to the Shura Council. Moreover, topics which were earlier overlooked by the council members are now presented by the female members, including such important issues as human rights for women and children, underage marriage, healthcare, etc. In addition, agendas based on women's issues are also discussed in the council. For example, discussions on women's right to drive, on preventing the underemployment of women, and on passing a uniform law for obtaining real estate loans (Salhi, 2013), which were earlier limited to men only. Now, regardless of their marital status, women in Saudi Arabia are eligible to apply for real estate loans. Out of 150 council members, 76 were in favour of this proposal.

The status of women has improved on the societal level, where councilwomen have been working on improving the employment conditions of women and

creating more job opportunities for local people, including women. In addition to this, elected women council members are pushing to revise certain laws of the Kingdom, including those on male guardianship (Drury, 2015).

There are many voices in KSA – particularly the more conservative ones – that are critical of the ruling family for having very close relations with Washington. This can be further elaborated upon through the case of preachers, who may accuse the ruling family of corruption and criticise their alliance with the US, yet are against the jihadi groups that attack various nations (The Guardian, Burke, 2011).

The greatest challenge the government of KSA faces is an ultra-conservative constituency, which has a legacy extending back decades. To bring about significant change, the government must control the aggressive forces that wish to maintain traditional views in the field of education and in the social norms of the country (Ahmed, 2010). Conservative traditions are deeply rooted in the society of KSA. One of the major issues for the government is to find a way to reform this conservative attitude according to current practices.

A key indicator of the prospect for reform is the attitude towards the role of women. Although the percentage of women enrolled on Saudi Arabia's university courses is 58%, they still form only 8% of the labour force. As indicated by the surveys and studies, more involvement of women is vital to increase economic growth and family income as well (World Bank, 2004). There are a number of restrictions, based on traditional religious ideals, which oppose women playing a significant role in the development of society. These limitations include being segregated according to gender in the workplace, being unable to drive and

requiring the permission of a man to travel, to obtain healthcare, education or employment (World Bank, 2004).

An insight into how reform can clash with traditionalist interests was provided by the case of Sheikh Saad bin Nasser Al-Shethri's discharge from the high council of religious scholars. His dismissal illustrates the conflict between traditional beliefs and necessary reform. He was working as a moderate cleric, according to Saudi standards, but disapproved of and condemned the decision made by the King to allow both sexes to work together to conduct research in KAUST. King Abdullah had close ties with the university due to its major role in directing economic modernisation in KSA. In this instance, Sheikh Saad mentioned that allowing both genders to work together could result in a sin. This is according to the logic that when men work with women, their mind can be diverted and they lose focus from their work, i.e. concentrating on education. He believed that it is the responsibility of teachers/scholars to provide lessons to leaders to choose the right path, so that they do not lose track and risk God's punishment (Burke, 2011). His criticism led to his dismissal.

 These tensions hark back to earlier disputes, such as the riots that occurred in the 1960s when rulers introduced increased participation for women in education (Propok, 2003).

The challenge appears to be in limiting the forces that practice violent methods in order to prevent changes to conservative practices (Ahmed, 2010). How politically feasible is it to stop the trend towards violence to challenge change? Has a certain context developed to such an extent that to seek to bring about reform underestimates how deeply the religious philosophy has permeated

current practice? It is hoped that the study will provide some insight into these issues.

For some observers of the Saudi educational system, it is evident that the rulers of KSA cannot frame or change policy before thinking about the consequences of the modification in terms of religious beliefs (Propok, 2003). It is suggested that the persons in authority tend to suppress the content and activities in schools, in mosques and on television (Doran, 2004).

Referring back to the KFUPM research (2003), its findings draw similar critical conclusions about the provision of higher education in KSA. As with the pre-university sector, higher education faces problems associated with absorbing the massive increase in student numbers averaging an annual intake growth of 12%. The Ministry of Planning (2003) conceded that during the implementation of the Seventh National Development Plan, a significant influx of over 250,000 new students would be problematic for existing institutions.

The further problem is that while student numbers increase markedly, there is a preference for non-scientific or technological studies such as religious, social studies or literary studies. As Madhi and Barrientos (2003, p. 70) noted, 80% of the population pursuing a graduate course in local universities in 1995 opted for humanities subjects – comprising of arts, literature, education, sociology and religious teachings. The numbers choosing technical and scientific subjects were much lower, for example, the percentage of graduates from various branches such as meteorology, environmental studies, and geology consisted of only 2% in 1995. Al-Shammary et al. (2003), do note more promising trends in vocational and technical secondary education, where numbers were 'to some extent' in line

with labour market requirements, but 'need reinforcement'. This leads to the conclusion that human capital requirements identified as necessary for future needs are not being met.

Other studies have noted the marked preference for literary studies over the technical or scientific studies that are required by the labour market (Al Sultan, 1998; Al Anssary 2001). Al Dikheelallah (2000) points out that a further outcome of the prevalence of literary studies is the continued practice of a theoretical lecture model of teaching, as opposed to more practical, hands-on teaching which is better suited to the labour market. In other words, teaching methods are still geared towards memorisation and the passing of exams. Al-Sheikh (2001) identifies a further issue of gender imbalance. Female students form the majority of the population, but are nonetheless underrepresented in areas such as technical and vocational training. It is noted that Saudi female employment remains heavily concentrated in education and administration (Ministry of Planning, 2005).

Madhi and Barrientos (2003) predicted further outcome problems due to the economic problems of the nation caused by a drop in the price of oil, since the demand for skilled workers has not been met. Haider (2003) concluded that the graduates of universities and technical colleges were young and in search of job opportunities. Most of the time, young people have difficulty in searching for jobs, as the levels of education and training do not match the demand and expectations.

> *'Many young Saudi graduates from both the universities and technical colleges are looking for employment. In most cases, they*

> *are not able to find jobs because their education and training are*
> *not compatible with the demand.' (Haider, 2003)*

Returning to the KFUPM (2003) research, this study also notes some confusion in the expectations of students enrolling on GOTEVT courses or training.

Another problem is that there are different perceptions of the purpose of higher education. For the government, this process, once completed, should see the trainee entering the labour market. However, some trainees see it as a step to further or higher education. The implication has to be that even those entering vocational training are not necessarily certain to get into the labour market, at least in the immediate or short term. According to the KFUPM study, the poor perception students have of vocational or technical training might explain this. In other words, they think such courses are inferior to a traditional higher education degree. This problem extends to the level of teaching expertise in the GOTEVT sector, as compared to the tertiary education sectors, again influencing perceptions.

Madha (2001) notes the disjuncture between Saudi labour market demands and government programmes. An identified difficulty is that government control of training makes investment less attractive to private sector sources. This issue points again to problems of bureaucracy. Another issue is the lack of a qualifications yardstick, as no nationally recognised standards or assessment body exists. This suggests that coordination issues exist between the higher and vocational education sectors and the private sector, and that these impede the policy aims set out by successive development plans. Interestingly, these issues are the same as those that have arisen in connection with problems implementing the aims of the Saudization programmes. This raises questions as

to the extent that the mismatch between government, its systems, organisation and delivery is hindering, rather than aiding, the reform project that has been identified as crucial to wider policy aims.

3.2.2 Saudization versus Unemployment

The promise to reduce the population of foreigners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with the help of rules framed at the state level is known as Saudization, as defined in the introduction of this thesis (Al-Subhi, Al-Harbi 1997, Al-Dosary and Rahman, 2005, Gulf, 2008). Saudization, sometimes referred to as localization, has been dubbed as the removal of foreigner workers and replacing with domestic workers in an organised manner (Al-Harbi, 1997, p.87). It is a policy that 'favours domestic workers' (Meed, 2007). According to Looney (2004), the government of KSA has formulated a policy of Saudization comprising of three main goals:

- To create job opportunities in all sectors of the nation.
- To decrease the dependence on foreigner workers and offer local people job opportunities.
- To stem capital flow back to the foreign land as foreigners return to their native land.

The policy of Saudization imposes requirements, on both the government and the private sector, through a quota policy that reserves some positions for domestic workers (Looney, 2004). According to the government, the proposal aims to achieve a high level of security and improve the capabilities of the people in the nation (Ministry of Labour, 2008). Saudization was developed as a plan in the Fourth National Development Plan (1985-1990), though it was not executed

completely until the Fifth National Development Plan was brought in force (1991-1996). The Fifth Plan highlighted the risks involved due to their current dependency on foreign workers. The plan aimed to hire 659,000 Saudi people while removing 319,000 foreign workers from the workplace. Other features included steps to provide training, and levies and concessions to encourage companies to generate job opportunities for local people (The Fifth Development Plan, 1991-1996).

The Saudi Arabian government established compliance ratios for industries. The percentage of local people required in contracting companies was set at 5%, while for the sector dealing with gold, local people should comprise of at least 10% of the industry's employees, which should keep on increasing between 2% and 5% per year (Meed, 2007). In other words, the policy operates clear quota systems.

The penalties for failure to comply with these targets included the withdrawal of certain government advantages, a halt on employing job applicants from a foreign land or refusal to renew the permission which had been granted (Labour Law in KSA, 1996). Therefore, 'the Saudization efforts, in order to remove foreign workers from jobs and increase job opportunities for nationals', have relied heavily on quota systems (GULF, 2005, p. 3).

However, problems with the quota system have been identified. The government placed the policy and its enforcement with GOTEVT (General Organisation for Technical Education and Vocational Training). However, while assessing the impact of the policy on entrenching Saudization, Meed (2004) noted that the framed policy was not issued and implemented properly. Labour offices had not

paid attention as they were continuing to give out work permits and visas for foreign workers. There were 25 reserved categories out of which 21 had been neglected by the authorities.

Al-Dosary and Rahman (2005, p. 495) made a different complaint. They pointed out that Saudization should concentrate on skill development among the people of the nation by providing high-quality training. Incentives policies should be used instead of the quota system. In other words, a number counting exercise achieves little unless the skills to encourage higher standards run alongside the quota system. Indeed, the policy can be counterproductive in replacing skilled foreign workers with less skilled domestic workers.

It is possible that the private sector in KSA has demonstrated its opposition to Saudization efforts because of such concerns. Mellahi and Wood (2001, p. 147) provided four linked causes due to which the private sector opposed Saudization namely, labour cost, social and cultural beliefs persisting in the private sector, worker discipline and control, and unsuccessful efforts to accommodate in a multicultural work environment. They conclude (2001, p. 148): 'The intervening nature of the Saudi economy was responsible for the suffering of locals, who have fewer skills and whose work experience does not match the superior job status they have been offered.'

The extant literature addresses the success or failure of the Saudization policy. The consensus appears to be that the outcome has been mixed and is sensitive to conditions within certain business sectors. The first stage of the Saudization programme is thought to have attained success, notably in government departments where the number of foreign workers is very small, around 20% of

the workforce. In contrast, there was no major achievement observed in the private sector and the number of foreign workers remains high, comprising 90% of the jobs. Pakkiasamy (2004) concluded that most private trading systems opposed the localisation programme as it introduced rules that were not beneficial for hiring local workers, who are more expensive. Mohsen (2000) argued that local efforts must distinguish the highly skilled foreign workers from the less-skilled foreign workers. The need exists for the government to develop job programmes to tackle the unemployment rate, but to do so without inflicting harm on private firms (Sahlawi 2004). Mahdi's findings (2005) concluded that private businesses would struggle due to the reduction in the number of foreign workers because of the Saudization policy.

Despite the localisation efforts, some authors argued that the private sector of KSA still prefers foreign employees. There are many contributing factors to this preference for foreign employees: local people demand higher pay for their work; local people have negative cultural and social beliefs regarding work status; and local people are less skilled, offer poor communication skills, and have low discipline and commitment to the firm. In other words, the concerns that predated Saudization have survived the implementation of the policy.

Others noted that, generally, the authorities have not been strictly implementing the laws and regulations. This raises the prospect that the situation might improve if the proposals are more rigorously enforced. Harry (2007, p.144) suggests better enforcement might be called for, given what is at stake: 'that government and business owners should put efforts in order to support the idea

of employment and localization so as to save KSA from serious problems related to security and economic problems'.

A number of solutions to the problem of underachievement of goals have been suggested. The solutions include reinforcing the goals by instigating more challenging targets and revising the aims. In the Seventh Development Plan (2000-2004), it clearly stated that local people would be given chance to occupy jobs to the ratio of 25% of the private sector. In this plan, businesses were further encouraged to exchange foreign workers with local people, estimating an intake of 150,000 local individuals per year. The government also came forward to declare that it would create new job opportunities for Saudis. In order to implement the steps taken, the Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF) was established with a budget of USD 1 billion, so that training could be given efficiently without any interruption, and salaries to the trainees could be provided initially.

Wadeea (2000), however, questioned these proposals, arguing that the local programmes did not properly address local labour market structures and conditions. Other authors stressed the lack of synchronisation between the government and private sector in terms of figuring out the skills needed to meet vacant job positions in the private sector. Almashooq and Al-Gaith (1996) identified the required qualities and skills and argued that only the education system could help in the development of these skills for Saudi graduates.

Al-Dosary and Rahman (2005, p. 499) argued that Saudization efforts had been taken for the benefit of people in the private sector; yet, in comparison, the progress ratio in the public sector is higher. As the policy was principally aimed

at the private sector, this has to be a concern. Mellahi (2007, p. 94) similarly noted that where progress has been made, this is not necessarily for the right reasons. He found that when the private sector followed the rules stated through Saudization quotas, it was not because they considered hiring workers from outside the county an unethical activity, but because of the trouble with sanctions. In other words, the private sector complies not because they think it is a worthwhile exercise, but because they have been compelled to do so.

Even though quotas have been stated and sanctioned by the government, these quotas are being avoided or changed by lobbying. Mellahi and Wood (2001, p. 149) note that the rules outlined by the government are being disobeyed, while Gulf (2008, p. 2) suggested that the decision to reduce the quota of Saudization from 30% to 20% in selected industries reinforces the idea that the government is trying to keep a balance between improving stability in relationships with the business community and simultaneously creating job for citizens to help them in the near future.

The success of the Saudization venture seems debatable. The current situation allows us to reflect on the warning from Rees (2007) that reliance on foreign workers would lead to long-term problems in terms of political and economic stability, which would result in the rise of a difficult situation.

3.2.3 Women's Empowerment

3.2.3.1 The Role of Religion and Changes in the Role of Women Since the Foundation of the Kingdom

Among the challenging factors, women and the role of religion are key factors influencing economic and social activities in Saudi Arabia to a highly significant extent.

Islam is the state religion of KSA and underpins the law of the country (Sindi, 2004). One of the most common issues in the contemporary political debate relates to the so-called partnership between the Saudi government and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was a Muslim scholar who studied, with his grandfather, Hambali Islamic law, one of the strict conservative Muslim legal schools. He moved from his homeland to Adderiyah where Ibn Saud was the leader at that time. In 1744, they promised to work together to establish a state which was run according to Islamic principles.

The political alliance between Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the Saudi royal family is considered highly significant. The sense of religious contribution from the leaders was to lay the base for their political authority. As a consequence of this alliance, Islamic principles have been adhered to religiously in the internal political arena, as well as in the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia.

The pact between Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Ibn Saud helped to establish the very first Saudi state. It further led to the establishment of a modern national state that involved centralisation and the creation of state institutions (Rieger, 2016).

Saudi Arabia is solely an Islamic society. There is no freedom to practice any religion other than Islam, this has been prohibited since the 1980s (Hobbs, 2012). Saudi Arabians practice Shia and Sunni Islam only.

Returning to the subject of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the following paragraphs detail a little of the religious background in Saudi Arabia to highlight how it affects current circumstances. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab had travelled extensively for years for business and education, to Egypt, Syria, India and Iraq where he met Hempher, a British spy who was sent from London with others to destabilise the Ottoman Empire by creating conflicts among Muslims (Sindi, 2004). Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was thus convinced of the idea of a political alliance with the leaders of these countries.

According to Ali (2015), Wahhabi is a term broadly used outside the Arabian Peninsula to refer to conservative Sunni Islam, and in the late 20th century was used by Western media who believed that it was a sect of Islam that went back to Sheikh Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. However, the Saudis never call themselves Wahhabis. They are Muslims who follow the Sunni Sheikh Ahmad bin Hanbil. Furthermore, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab did not start a new Islamic sect, he educated people in the central region of the Arab peninsula. Some Muslims believe that Western usage of the term unfairly carries a negative connotation (Blanchard, 2008).

The 1970s witnessed the rise of Islamic activism which had originally been part of US foreign policy to counter the socialist expansion of the Soviet Union in Muslim countries. The victory of so-called Mujahidin against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 introduced many radical Islamists to the

international arena and made them a central player, both politically and militarily. Many of these groups were trained by America, such as Al-Qaida. This deadly policy is being repeated in the region with the rise of the Al-Khomeini revolution influence (Iyaad, 2016). Citing the disastrous work of Al-Qaida, Saudi foreign policy has become hostage and a victim to terrorist acts of individuals. Despite the unpredictability of individuals in any nation or any religion, some from the outside have begun to question the role of Saudi domestic schools in fostering a sense of intolerance towards other religions and cultures (Blanchard, 2008). While few see what is called Wahhabism to be an immediate or direct threat to the West, no doubt the religious institution will have some elements of alarming hardliners.

In addition to a rise in Islamic activism, other events in the late 1970s, such as the Iranian Revolution, also impacted upon society leading to a resurgence in fundamentalism and a demand for a more conservative (less-Westernised) Islamic society in Saudi Arabia.

Harmony between the state and religion is essential and develops over time. In Saudi Arabia, the religious institution aims to protect Islam from religious deviations and heretical doctrine. While more recent political decisions taken by the state are based on the merits of sovereignty and build their implementations on political best judgment, at the same time there is often a fundamental conflict in values and measures for many public policies from the perspective of the religious institution. This is not readily resolvable by religious doctrine, and any mixing between religion and state might create a continuing problem for the government (Iyaad, 2016). The close cooperation

between the Saudi government and religious institutions affects the political strength, institutional resources and privileges in the Kingdom.

Although traditionally the political-religious alliance established, controlled and regulated the realms of education, religion and the law, wherein each of them enjoyed freedom to act independent of the state, with further institutionalisation of religion, Islam was sought to play a more active role in KSA, whereupon females felt the maximum impact.

In this regard, female education was under strict religious control and strict regulations were imposed on public morality, such as gender segregation. In addition to that, another key control was in the form of a strict ban on women studying outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Rieger, 2016). Saudi Arabian women were not allowed to drive cars, wear inappropriate clothes or makeup, converse with men, swim or participate in sports. Since the 1980s, women had not even been allowed to try on clothes while shopping. However, things are evolving, the scenarios are changing and women are allowed to participate in certain things, therefore, women are starting to come to the forefront (Samovar et al., 2016).

Women in Islam are equal to men. Islam has guaranteed women's rights. Prophet Mohammad consulted women and wanted their opinions. Around 1,400 years ago, women were given roles and duties and worked with men in many sectors, they were involved in education and in the hadith were engaged in commercial transactions and were encouraged to seek knowledge. Prophet Mohammad's wife Aisha was a well-known authority in medicine history and

rhetoric (Moussalli, 2009). Khalifa Omar appointed women to serve as officials in the market of Al Medina.

> *'Surely, men who submit themselves to God and **women** who submit themselves to Him, and believing men and believing **women**, and obedient men and obedient **women** and truthful men and truthful **women**, and men steadfast in their faith and steadfast **women**, and men who are humble and **women** who are humble, and men who give alms and **women** who give alms, and men who fast and **women** who fast, and men who guard their chastity and **women** who guard their chastity, and men who remember Allah much and **women** who remember Him — Allah has prepared for all of them forgiveness and a great reward.* Quran Chapter Al Ahzaab verse (35)'

> *'Seeking knowledge is mandate for every Muslim'* (male and female) said Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him).

It is important to emphasise that the political alliance called 'Wahhabism' by those outside the Kingdom, sees this practice which has been evidently effective since the 1980s as a movement of a conservative social, theological and religious nature (Moussalli, 2009). Saudi Arabian laws regarding women's participation in the workforce are based on Shariah Law, which guarantees a woman's right to work, but according to KSA traditions, has to be in an appropriate environment. Women are not allowed to mix with men. Thus, occupation gender segregation is quite popular in Saudi workplaces. Moreover, women are limited to only those jobs that are considered to be feminine and thus have less distinguished positions than men. Thus, it is important for Saudi Arabia to promote female participation in the workforce to redefine growth and development.

We all recognise the importance of cooperation between a state and the religious institutions in any country, including Saudi Arabia. However, there have been examples where the view of the government has been different from

that of the religious institution. Throughout the last century, Saudi women, supported by the government, started a campaign to achieve rights for education (Hamdan, 2005). It is worth noting that the struggle for Saudi women's education was ignited after the Ministry of Higher Education's decision to send a few Saudi men abroad to complete their study. Though the Saudi government was very used to dealing with conservative religious scholars, the ministerial decree raised the issue of equality along gender lines. Some observers argued that fact when a young Saudi lady named Fatima Shakir asked for the same privilege. Her application for a grant from the Ministry of Higher Education was turned down with unanimous support from conservative religious scholars on the ground of immorality in sending a single and young woman to study abroad (Hamdan, 2005).

To a great extent, Fatima and her family's request was considered an outrageous act by religious scholars, tribal leaders and the ordinary people. As a result of that rejection, the family of Fatima Shakir had to appeal to King Faisal who was known to be a supporter of women's education. Not surprisingly, King Faisal reversed the objection filed by the religious institution and allowed Fatima Shakir to travel abroad to pursue her PhD. King Faisal's intervention had a substantial impact and the seeds of women's education in Saudi Arabia were planted from that moment by the head of state (Arebi, 1994).

According to Lacey (1981), the consequences of King Faisal's royal approval to formal women's education were much larger in scope and received widespread support from ordinary Saudi citizens. On the other hand, the city of Buraydah in Qasim Province saw widespread demonstrations from religiously radicalised

groups against women's education (Lacey, 1981). In the wake of the hardliners that were clamped down in the Buraydah riots of late 1963, King Faisal and Princess Iffat gave clear signals of their reform process and decided to establish the first women's academy placed in Jeddah, to allow them to achieve their aspirations. King Faisal adopted a notion of free choice for individual families as to whether to send their daughters to school. With this free choice for parents in place, King Faisal tried to soothe religious hardliners fears and at the same time reject the impression propagated by religious scholars that women's education would ultimately result in the eradication of Saudi Arabia's past. In a cautionary way, the conservative religious scholars switched their primary objection to then declare that the education of girls could only take place with string of conditions, such as girl's school being surrounded by high walls (Yamani, 1996).

In spite of these reservations by religious hardliners against women's education, the Saudi government continued to pursue its policy. The distinction is important because, as Yamani (1996) notes, the public reaction to King Faisal's support for women's education varied depending on the region. While Saudi citizens in Hijaz in the western provinces such as Makkah, Jeddah and Madinah welcomed the choices of the government, because they lived in societies that were slightly more heterogeneous, the other regions and provinces in the country treated these developments with cynicism. Yamani believes those people supported women's education because many of the residents were settlers who stayed after performing hajj or omrah. The effect of those settlers who were given citizenship after coming from different Islamic and Arabic countries was enormous. According to Yamani's assertion, most of those settlers may have no tribal connections; hence, they were keen to diversify

racial mix and class equality through education (Yamini, 1996). This and other decisions by the various Saudi governments in past decades have especially illuminated the courageous choices that decision makers in the Saudi government took during a difficult period. The evidence indicates that, contrary to the opinions expressed throughout some sections of the literature, the Saudi government did have and still has the right policy on all issues strategically important for the welfare of its citizens.

In recent times, the status of women has not only improved on the societal level, rather Saudi councilwomen are striving hard to improve the status of women on the political and legal level as well. In addition, councilwomen are also trying to work on improving the employment conditions of women. For this propose, they are promoting Saudization. Saudization motivates to reduce foreign labour and create more job opportunities for local people, including women. In addition to this, elected women council members are pushing to revise certain laws of the Kingdom, including those relating to male guardianship. Rules on male guardianship state that it is mandatory for a woman to have a male guardian to participate in different aspects of public life (Haddad and Esposito, 1997).

Therefore, from the above, it can be concluded that the dialogue on women's affairs in the Third National Meeting was a valuable addition to Saudi socio-economic reform, according to the reform initiative in KSA. Thus, it can be inferred that the key dialogue on women affairs played a major role in the improvement of social and economic reforms in KSA. In the Fourth National Meeting (Jeddah) - Young People's Expectations, December 7–9, 2004, the many challenges facing Saudi youth were discussed. The issues mainly related to

unemployment and measures that should be undertaken by the local government, as well as companies operating within the country (Zuhur, 2011).

3.2.3.2 Role of Women in Economic Development

Many official Saudi Arabian policies and programmes promise significant steps toward the increased contribution of women in the workplace, offering them more opportunities. However, the women of KSA still face many challenges in terms of legislation, social norms and customs, education and occupational constraints. The country is attempting to enhance their capabilities and eliminate obstacles to their participation.

The Eighth Five-Year Development Plan (2005-2009) focused on empowering women by providing them with job opportunities and enhancing the importance of their contribution to society. In 2007, a plan was put forward proposing that women would be offered one-third of government jobs in KSA, and more jobs would be created for them as well. The types of jobs to be created included making reservations through the Internet, working at a phone facility, and employment in the tourist industry for women. Furthermore, technical colleges for women were established and scholarships were given to females to study abroad in different subjects and different cultures. (The implementation of this plan will be discussed in the case study of this thesis.)

New reforms opened doors for all Saudi women to participate in all walks of life. Saudi businesswomen, for example, are making significant progress in their efforts to change laws that have forbidden women from engaging in the business world at all. These changes included a 2004 ministerial decree to allow Saudi women to set up a business without the need for a male guardian. Women are

now allowed to apply for IDs without the consent of a male guardian (Bashraheel, 2011). Existing higher education institutions opened up more degrees to women which were previously restricted to men, while the establishment of new universities has opened still more doors. However, other obstacles remain. For example, women require a male guardian when travelling and there has been little progress on the issue of women driving cars (Bashraheel, 2011).

As to engagement in business and female employment, in general, the available statistics reveal that Saudi Arabia's proportion of registered women-owned businesses is among the largest of those Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries surveyed. The statistics also reveal that 72.6% of registered women- owned businesses operate from premises outside the home, 92% of which have workers who are being paid. However, businesswomen in KSA are less likely than neighbouring GCC businesswomen to engage in trade at the international level, as only 21.3% are employed in either import or export trade, or both (Bashraheel, 2011).

An Arab News article of 17 January 2011 indicated that businesswomen in KSA are more powerful, since they are the owners of their businesses as compared to MENA businesswomen. The article also reported that they do not spend unnecessarily when compared with their other regional colleagues and friends and keep control on their business activities because men manage most of the daily work. Ultimately, businesswomen in KSA are far more educated than the general workforce in KSA.

This group comprises 58% of businesswomen who have pursued a post-secondary education, most of whom pursued their education abroad.

Comparatively, the Ministry of Economy and Planning have statistics from 2004, which showed that 21.3% of the general workforce in KSA possessed a post-secondary degree (Bashraheel, 2011).

Businesswomen in KSA are involved in a number of fields of endeavour including work that is art-based, such as fashion, jewellery, interior design and photography. Other popular businesses include beauty salons, wholesale and retail enterprises, and executive services including consulting, marketing, public relations, and even the field of management and education. Businesswomen are taking advantage of their studies and the accelerated pace of reform to create enterprises that play an increasingly important role in the nation's economy (Al-Munajjed, 2014).

Sweeping reforms in the educational system of KSA are a significant requirement if women in KSA are to be prepared properly for competitive jobs. An environment that encourages Saudi women in the labour market and introduces them to higher ranking market positions should be included in the implementation of labour market and law reforms. Obtaining a degree does not always guarantee employment. Many Saudi women hold a degree, but not all of them participate in the workforce.

In this respect, the statistics reveal that about 64% of the graduates holding a bachelor's degree from a public or private university in Saudi Arabia between the years 2010 and 2012 were female. However, only 13% of the Saudi Arabian women occupy employed positions in the private or public sector (Al Alarabiya English, 2015). In this respect, there have been some pertinent factors, such as gender segregation and excessive dependence on males, which have influenced

the employment of females. Women are caught in the cross-fire between the modernisers and the conservatives; a conflict that has been raging in the Kingdom and influencing the rate of employment among the females (Mittelstaedt and Shafy, 2015).

One positive move, however, is that some Saudi women are now accepting teaching jobs in neighbouring countries such as Kuwait, Bahrain, UEA and Qatar, and these offer better salaries and opportunities (Business Intelligence Middle East Staff, 2010). It is important, then, to look at what outstanding factors continue to militate against positive reforms that aim to enshrine women's rights. This study will now identify the major stumbling blocks that still remain for women's empowerment in the workforce.

According to UNESCO (2007), women in rural areas play a significant role in the workforce; however, the goal of approximately 1 million women in the workforce has yet to be met. The goal was not reached because demands in terms of skills and education were not reached or, in some cases, due to male control of women's lives. Education of Saudi girls is based on cultural and traditional norms and limited subjects are taught. However, with the reform movement now underway and with a positive attempt to overcome discrimination policies in government institutions, women have gained more opportunities in education, training, scholarships and the labour market.

The public sector has been providing positions for Saudi women, as 30% of government employees are women. A total of 95% of Saudi women who work outside the home are engaged in the public sector: 85% are engaged in education, which is comprised of teaching and administrative positions, 6% are

employed in public health and 4% are occupied in administration. The remaining 5% of women are engaged in the private sector, in a limited number of jobs such as banking and private business. However, it should be noted that the number of women in the private sector in KSA increased by 27% from 40,000 to 51,000 in the years 2006 to 2007.

Between 2000 and 2008, the number of women working in the banking sector rose from 972 to 3,700, an increase of 28%. While 97% of women who have their own private business are confined to the fields of wholesale and trade, finance and construction. Saudi women are owners of 12% of the country's enterprises including 16% of large manufacturing firms (The Eighth Development Plan, 2005-2009).

The Kingdom's Saudization efforts have helped in recognising positions that are specifically designed for women, such as the jobs of receptionists, tailors, banquet-hall employees and nutritionists. As a consequence of this labour market segmentation, it is believed that there is a deficiency in providing basic education to women and girls. The education provided by the public sector does not help girls to develop skills in order to compete in the labour market, as it does not enhance the skills required for analysis, problem-solving, communication and creativity. The issue of labour market segmentation will be discussed in the following chapters and the data analysis of this thesis.

Saudi women are still fighting the limitations and restrictions of both education and the professional world. Few women are gaining access to professions other than teaching or health, because of social, cultural and religious traditions (Amani, 2005). However, the subject of women's segregation has begun to be

discussed publicly, since members of the younger generation are increasingly aware of the problem, and they are likely to call for more rights in the future. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was given consent by KSA with regard to the human rights abuse of male guardianship and sex segregation in the Kingdom. Although KSA maintained some reservations about provisions that were seen to contradict Shariah Law, it is important to note that KSA is a signatory to this UN convention (CEDAW, 2007).

The government has also become more aware of the need for educational reform and the need to increase the contribution of women in the labour market in general. Saudi Arabia displays concern over financial, administrative and technical issues. Social and traditional boundaries are also under reform and reconsideration by the Saudi people, especially the younger generation who access other cultures through both the Internet and travel. The KASP programme provides opportunities for young women to travel and live abroad in open societies. This study will explore how women involved in the programme developed their thoughts and knowledge and how they accepted change.

Saudi policymakers are also taking the idea of higher and vocational education for women more seriously. Women are not admitted to major fields such as engineering, law, political science, petroleum and pharmacology but, under the reforms taking place, they are taking the opportunity to study these fields abroad through KASP. When the market is not yet open for them in the above-mentioned fields, the question is: what do women who are now studying law or engineering, for example, aim to do after finishing their studies, especially those who are given

a scholarship from the government to study abroad? This study will focus on this area.

There is also a visible scarcity of education essential for the development of the new knowledge-based economy, especially the fields of technology, science and computers. Technological advancement, eradication of practices leading to class conflicts and the political action itself results in the enhancement of society and leads to development.

The private universities have started coming out of their shells to contribute to the economy of the nation. One such institution is Effat College, in the Western province, where women enjoy more freedom than in any other part of the Kingdom. This university ran Saudi Arabia's first engineering course for women. Its syllabus is in compliance with the American model, and it works collaboratively with the US-based Duke University in order to raise the level of engineering courses. After Effat College, other private universities were established, such as the Prince Sultan University, in the capital city, Riyadh, and Prince Muhammad Bin Fahad, in Al Khubar, in the eastern province. KSA is a nation steeped in tradition, which is influenced by class structure at the regional, national and global level, so the acceptance of change comes slowly and carefully. However, the Kingdom's decision to open state schools for girls during the 1960s helped in producing educated women in the country, many of whom are fighting for political rights.

As mentioned in previous chapters, in October 2007, the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) was opened, marking an important step in the country's educational reform. The university adopted the

co-education of men and women, highlighting the authorities' determination to make a major breakthrough in a conservative society that has always maintained very strict traditions of segregation between men and women, both in the workplace and at social gatherings.

The project was also considered an acknowledgement of the problem facing KSA and the Arab world in training new generations in the fields of science and technology. There remain societal objections to the idea of allowing genders to mix in educational institutions and the workplace; these, however, are not affecting the government's efforts to change and develop the country.

Saudi society appears to be accepting these changes gradually and steadily. Most of its people are encouraging this movement, and making greater efforts themselves to embrace change, but some are afraid of it, especially the most conservative religious people, who believe that change will leave the Kingdom far removed from its religious traditions. This study will highlight this area by interviewing KASP students and analysing their responses towards accepting change.

A programme, Women in Technology (WIT) was introduced as a joint effort between Microsoft and the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the US Department of State. The local partners include nine countries, one of which is KSA. The programme encourages an increase in the role of women in the workplace by supporting local organisations. Since its launch in 2005, WIT has created a platform for women to gain IT and professional skills so that they can opt for new careers and increase their ability to shape society (Zorob and Metcalf, 2011).

The Arab region is still far behind other regions in the world with respect to women's power and responsibilities. This is ironic, as the early Islamic period saw powerful role models for women in business, such as Khadija, who was the first wife of Prophet Mohammad. A World Bank publication stated that gender biases are increasing in developing countries that are moving towards competitive markets and advancing in the technology field. The report also clarified that if this negative process and these biases are not controlled, then the gender gap will increase, which will give birth to obstacles restricting social change (Melhem and Tandom, 2009).

Gender equality should be inevitable worldwide since women comprise more than 50% of the world's population, and productivity and efficiency in the labour market suffer when they are not participating. The primary goal of the Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000 at the UN Millennium Summit, is to support the idea of equality and empowerment of women in an effective way so as to reduce poverty, hunger and disease. Strong links exist between gender equality and growth; yet, only four countries have achieved approximate gender equality: Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (World Bank, 2003). Socially unacceptable behaviour and other gender-based barriers, such as gender segregation rules, put women at a serious disadvantage. These factors prevent Arab businesswomen from enjoying healthy competition with males in the workplace in their home countries. Such rules and barriers have significantly affected the lives and work of businesswomen.

Despite this, Arab businesswomen seem to be aspirational and motivated in the field of networking. The recent decade saw the introduction of organised links

among businesswomen in Arab countries. This can be attributed to two major factors: continual growth in the number of female-owned businesses in Arab nations, and the inspiration provided to women from other developments such as the establishment of the GCC Businesswomen Forums.

Women in KSA have achieved success in the political field by attaining official portfolios, which could help in framing financial policy. In other Arab countries, women are successful. In UAE, for example, Sheikhah Lubna Al-Qasimi has been designated as the nation's first female minister, while Kuwait did the same in the case of Massouma Al-Mubarak. KSA, meanwhile, appointed a Deputy Minister, Nourah Al-Fayes, as its first female politician, a move hailed as the most effective step for changes in the country (Middle East North Africa Business Information Centre). Al-Fayes has now retired and no other female has been appointed since then, but in 2012 Saudi women were elected and joined the parliament (Majlis al Shora).

Despite the fact that businesswomen continue to face hostility, criticism and rejection in some sectors of society, in recent years, Arab businesswomen have begun to attract the attention of local people as well as international media. In the last decade, a number of authorities in Arab countries have spoken in favour of Arab businesswomen taking on a broader range of responsibilities and expressing a stronger personality in society. In particular, KSA is a society in transition; its attitudes towards women's participation are changing, especially as a result of King Abdullah's encouragement.

Saudi Arabia is affected by all elements of globalisation, be they economic, technological, political, cultural, legal or ethical. This being so, it is particularly

important for this study to look at the impact of globalisation on the economic development of KSA. A wealth of literature exists stating that KSA is a deeply conservative country, with very closely guarded social and religious norms, which are rather impenetrable to others, and that the pace of change induced by outside factors is quite slow. Thus, this study examines and analyses these assumptions in detail, in order to establish whether this is indeed the case.

3.2.3.3 Saudi Women's Empowerment

The above argument focuses on the situation of women in the area of empowerment and equality. Empowerment has been discussed extensively in the literature, as a part of many development programmes. However, the literature on Saudi women's empowerment is almost non-existent, despite the fact that women have played a variety of important roles throughout Islamic history.

Culture and tradition ensure that Saudi social life is guided by Islamic values. Many Islamic countries have developed women's empowerment, but Saudi women continue to fight for the right to equality with men. In fact, women's affairs are a highly sensitive subject to tackle in the Kingdom, which makes scholars think twice before discussing issues related to women. Women's empowerment may not yet be an acceptable issue, because it is still not acceptable to many Saudis to give women freedom, space and opportunities to appear in public and private workplaces. Male dominance is a part of Saudi social life; even if there have been some changes and reforms for women's status (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

According to the United Nations Platform for Action Committee (UNPAC), women make a tremendous contribution to the world's economy (2010). Dex (1985, pp.

203-4) noted that women do not form a part of minority workforce and should be considered as a permanent part of the labour force.

In Saudi society, women are considered to be wives and mothers above all else. By the late 1990s, KSA had begun to discuss the need to enhance women's development. The movement came as a result of the UN process to achieve gender equality. Recent programmes and policies in development are promising steps towards women's greater participation in the national labour market, especially as the Saudi government has established initiatives to support women's development, one of these being KASP, which gives both men and women the same opportunities, as mentioned in the previous chapters. Although the labour force in KSA is 4,286,515 and female Saudi workers compromise 8.2% of this number, non-Saudi female workers comprise 6.7% of the total number, especially in health jobs (www.cdsi.gov.sa, 2009). On this basis, it can be concluded that the empowerment of women is important to deal with labour market requirements. The contribution of women in the labour market affects competency of the national human resources, as well as overall economic development. It is argued that differences in the education of men and women in KSA indicate an ineffectiveness to promote women's interests and self-efficacy so that they are equivalent to the Western and developed countries.

In terms of the low participation of women in the labour market and the lack of skilled and competent personnel to meet labour market demands, it can be generalised that gender equality needs to be promoted in the field of education, so that the availability of professional and knowledgeable national human resources will be maintained. The King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP)

was founded as a viable plan to promote the active participation of women in the labour market. This programme brings reform to educational opportunities for women by the way of financial aid or assistance, since lack of money may be one of the obstacles to gaining adequate education. This research is all about human capital investment in KSA and a background to KASP is therefore important, as this forms the case study of this research. The following section is a brief summary of KASP's goals and vision, which intends to enhance human capital investment, enrich the Saudization programme and solve unemployment.

3.3 The Case Study (King Abdullah Scholarship Programme, KASP)

'Today, we are not only celebrating Saudi Arabia's National day, but we are also celebrating a remarkable achievement made by a group of Saudi Arabia's most valuable asset; its citizens, who did not only meet their academic goals and challenges through King Abdullah Scholarship Programme, but also exceeded them by reaching excellence and becoming impressively innovative in their fields of specialty.

While I am overwhelmed by a great sense of pride as I congratulate them on their accomplishments, I also find myself obliged to extend, on behalf of my nation's leadership and people, our thanks and appreciation to you and to the prominent academic institutions you represent.

Your institutions did not only accommodate our students, who account for the future of our nation, and provide them with the highest levels of education, but also nurtured their talents and released their potential until they were able to reach higher levels of excellence and distinguished achievements that we are gathered here today to celebrate.'[6]

HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz,
the Ambassador of KSA to the UK,
(KSA National Day, September 2012)

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[6] The occasion: annual ceremony held in the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in London (on the National KSA Day) to celebrate the outstanding achievements of Saudi students of KASP in the UK).

3.3.1 Background

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is unique in its nature and position in the Middle East. KSA is also an active country within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as it has the largest land mass and is one of the most powerful and effective countries in the region. Globalisation has definitely had an impact on the GCC states, as it has with any other part of the world. The influence of globalisation is most apparent in the region's politics and economy, and in the social life of the population. There are governmental efforts towards reform in KSA, as is the case in all GCC states. This thesis focuses on the Saudi experience, as it is the most conservative country within the GCC, and the largest in area and population.

Saudi Arabia faces many challenges, more than the other GCC states, due to its unique and extraordinary configuration of social, economic and political arenas. KSA is more conservative and more globally represented by Islam, since the two holy mosques are located within its boundaries. This gives the country greater responsibility and means that sensible reform will have to be undertaken with very careful consideration (Paul, 1999).

Saudi Arabia is entering the 21st century whilst struggling to adopt new economic policies and move towards a market economy in order to meet the requirements of globalisation. The government of KSA is transforming the economy, which has positive implications for the financial system; it is attempting to carry the country to higher levels of development. The country became successful in joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2005 and is striving to achieve more.

It is significant that KSA is a member of the GCC and the objectives of the GCC are in line with general global trends of movement towards market economies and liberalisation. According to the GCC agreements, the Saudi government is willing to improve the economic infrastructure by taking measures to adopt a market-oriented economy, to enact laws which encourage foreign investment, and to unify its banking and financial legislation with other member states of the GCC (Amr, Daoud, 2008).

In this research, the link between educational reform and economic reform, with regard to the labour market in KSA, forms the basis of the case study, focusing particularly on how globalisation has influenced the country towards change. The study will tackle in depth educational reform, in particular examining how a well-qualified generation will be able to cope with the new age of globalisation. The thesis focuses on three main areas – economic reform, educational reform and unemployment – as these are primary issues of concern to Saudi Arabia's government. The three issues are very closely interrelated and will be comprehensively studied in the succeeding chapters. The thesis will explore how the government has sought solutions and strategies to help KSA overcome problems in the pace of development that it is witnessing.

Therefore, the three most important areas of study involve the basics for guaranteeing the stability of KSA and the potential for its people to live in peace. Major questions include: how important is educational reform in setting human capital development strategies to shape the future of the Kingdom's economic diversification and how has the government of KSA managed to push the wheel of reform in the last decade?

To answer these questions it is worth giving attention to KASP as a governmental initiative to support the strategy of human capital investment. A government scholarship programme was introduced in 2005 by King Abdullah to help young students of KSA to pursue their undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Western universities. This scholarship programme is a gateway for those students, who aspire to pursue their studies at the universities outside KSA.

The programme offered financial help to students from both genders and those with special needs, for tuition and education related expenses and living expenditure for up to five years. In other words, the scholarship programme supports youth from all segments of society with no exceptions. An approximate number of 5,000 students in KSA obtained scholarships from the government to study abroad for the 2007-2008 academic year. The students went to universities in developed countries such as the US, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, China and Japan. To pursue this scholarship programme, students are required to achieve certain standards set by the Ministry of Higher Education. The eligibility criteria require a high academic score, along with certain rules pertaining to sponsorship. With the help of this programme, students get an opportunity to explore diverse fields of education including maths, medicine and science (Alqahtani, 2014).

The purpose of the scholarship is to provide students who are accepted into the programme with the tools for economic success, as well as to give them a scholastic perspective. This programme is not only about the scholarship for the students, it also leads to the social and economic development of KSA. Moreover, this programme plays a crucial role in the cultural evolution of the students as they get a chance to live in a different country, which results in effective

interaction between various societies and cultures. There are certain key features of KASP, which make it a significant sponsorship programme. Some of the features are:

- Establishment of better career opportunities for aspiring students.
- Development of cultural and social interaction between various countries.
- Expansion of scope to study in proficient universities outside the country.
- Inclusion of all the types of degree so as to increase the skilled individuals in every field.
- Attainment of skilled working labour in KSA.

The types of courses available for the students are determined by the current needs of the Saudi Arabian government. The number of courses offered to graduate students is more than those available to undergraduates (Taylor and Albasri, 2014). This programme is highly beneficial for students as it provides them better career opportunities, which ultimately lead to financial stability for them. This programme also facilitates the progress of the country by providing a skilled workforce to the labour market. The programme is revised over a five-year period, then the revised programme is approved by the King of KSA. The students who pursue their studies through KASP, are prepared for various job opportunities soon after the completion of the course.

In 2008, there were more than 15,000 Saudi students in the UK, out of which, 25% were women who attended universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2008). Since then, the number of students pursuing the scholarship programme has increased. The programme is still running and young male and female students are eager to learn abroad and have the experience of living and studying

in an open environment. The Ministry of Higher Education (2005) stated that KASP aims to contribute to King Abdullah's reform programme (see Appendix 1).

Wang (2014) contends that the programme of scholarship is a crucial initiative for educational development. The scholarship programme supports prospective learners to meet knowledge and education requirements that are essential to building competency. This programme contributes efficiently to developing professional skills of people by helping them gain advanced and technical knowledge that that meets international standards. In the advanced technological world, technical knowledge has revolutionised the labour market. The scholarship programme offers an opportunity to boost the student's knowledge level to be on par with developed nations. This scholarship programme is associated directly with human resource development as it allows learners an opportunity to enrol in advanced courses to develop career-related skills. In the views of Smith and Abouammoh (2013), a scholarship provides financial assistance or aid to the prospective learners to take advantage of knowledge exposure. This assistance aims to develop inherent capabilities and knowledge to the utmost extent. The following sections highlight the vision, mission and goals of KASP as introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education.

3.3.2 KASP Vision

The vision of KASP is to prepare future generations on the basis of knowledge and education to fight the competition.

3.3.3 KASP Mission

KASP aims to create manpower in KSA in an efficient manner to allow the manpower to compete in an international market and focus on the areas of

research. The graduates of the programme will be an advantage in meeting the demands of manpower of Saudi universities and the private sector.

3.3.4 KASP Goals

- Providing funds for Saudis so that they can study in the best universities across the globe.

- Working to attain high standards professionally and academically by introducing a foreign scholarship programme.

- Sharing and learning the experience of different countries in educational, cultural and science fields.

- Preparing staff in a professional way so that they can cope with the work environment.

- Raising the standard of professionalism in Saudis.

3.3.5 KASP Statistics

During the last ten years, since the start of KASP, the number of KASP enrolments in US and other universities has increased from approximately 5,000 to 10,000. In the USA, California is a state that receives the highest enrolments per year (Oxford Business Group, 2016).

The percentage of KASP students pursuing courses such as law and social science has increased from 28.1% to 33.7%. With the rising number of enrolments, job vacancies have also increased to approximately 4,000 at the end of the year 2014 (Oxford Business Group, 2016). It can be seen that 21% of the total enrolments were for graduate courses and half of the enrolments for undergraduate levels.

It has been determined that only 23% of the overall enrolments contribute to other courses (ITA Education Top Markets Report, 2015). Of the total students who study abroad, 76% are through KASP, 13% are employer-sponsored students and 11% are self-sponsored students. Overall, 46% of the total number of students prefer pursuing higher education from the USA (Oregon receives the least number of enrolments) (Taylor and Albasri, 2014). The number of students expected to pursue education through KASP in the United States by the year 2018 is approximately 85,000.

The diagram below represents the growth in Saudi Arabian students across the world and specifically in the USA in the years between 2001 and 2013. According to the statistics, it can be concluded that enrolments have gradually increased from 2,000 to 20,000. The blue boxes represent the number of enrolments in the USA, which admits the higher number of students every year for pursuing higher education. This indicates that the USA is the most popular destination for sponsored students (Taylor and Albasri, 2014).
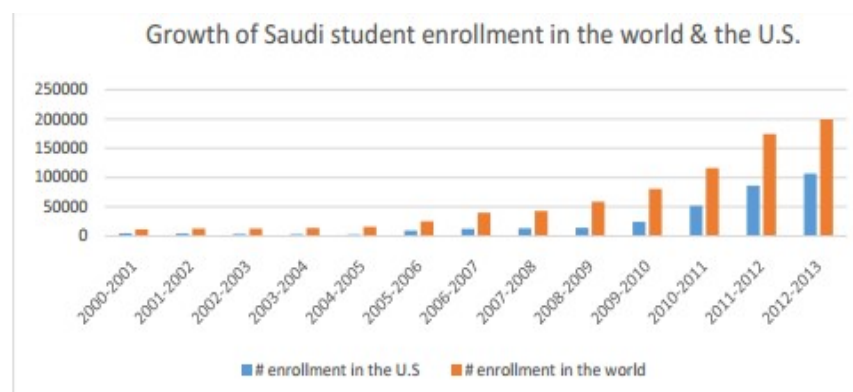
Figure 1: Growth of Saudi Students in the World and the US

(Source: www.scirp.org/journal/PaperDownload.aspx?paperID=51008.)

Female students make up approximately a quarter of the entire enrolment that takes place every year. From the table illustrated below, it can be seen that the percentage of female scholars has decreased. It was 28.64%, its highest level in the year 2003, and had fallen to 24.80% by the year 2012 (Abouammoh, Smith and Duwais, 2014). One of the major factors leading to a reduction in the number of female scholars is the fact that it is mandatory that a male relative accompanies female students (Haque, 2014).

The awareness of KASP among male and female students is the same in KSA. About 85% of the students agree with the goals and the vision of the programme (Alqahtani, 2014).

Year	Number of students	% female
2002	12,838	28.11
2003	13,658	28.64
2004	15,728	25.45
2005	25,441	19.74
2006	40,019	20.30
2007	42,806	18.99
2008	58,710	20.72
2009	80,827	22.44
2010	116,121	23.52
2011	120,645	23.94
2012	126,745	24.80

Table 1: Number of Saudi Higher Education Students Studying Abroad

(Source: http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_4_No_11_September_2014/5.pdf.)

The graph displayed in the figure below provides information regarding the number of students who enrolled through KASP in various states of America between the years 1995 and 2005. From above graph, it is indicated that the District of Colombia admitted the highest number of scholars among all the states, whereas Indiana received the least number of students. It can also be inferred that all of the other states enrolled approximately an equal number of

students. Until 2005, Florida also received a decent number of applicants, which increased gradually until 2012. The number of enrolments does not show a sudden jump, instead it has amplified steadily with the functions of KASP.
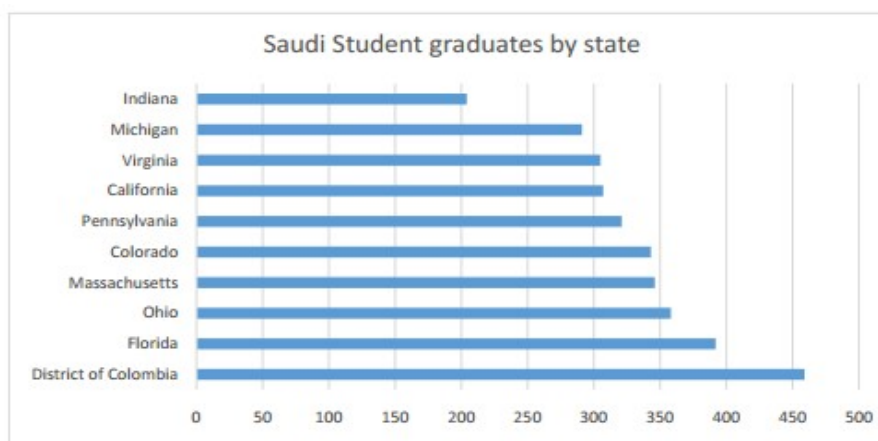
Figure 2: Saudi Students Graduates by State

(Source: www.scirp.org/journal/PaperDownload.aspx?paperID=51008.)

The overall impact of KASP is reflected in the increase in literacy in KSA. This programme has also contributed to the expansion of career opportunities for the citizens of the country. The scholarship focuses on the overall development of the students who will, ultimately, lead the country.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided a background to the education and training sector in KSA. It can be concluded that the education system in KSA should be enhanced or improved to a significant level, so that human capital requirements in KSA can be accomplished. Education is a base that develops students' competency along with academic and career-related skills, which ultimately will contribute to meeting the gap in the current and expected competency level of the labour market. The scholarship programme initiated by the Ministry of Education to promote

exposure to advanced knowledge for interested learners was found right to meet human capital development demand. It set out the different stages and levels of education and provided an overview of the general curricula.

The chapter also outlined the objectives and aims of various sectors, as well as mapping out the challenges faced. In keeping with the introductory chapters, this chapter aimed to delineate the context of reform and sought to provide a guide to the key issues faced. It is, retrospectively, clear that Saudi educational training and vocational efforts are suffering ongoing problems that threaten Saudi development goals. The next section of the thesis seeks to discover what key Saudi government actors and agencies have planned to address such problems. The following chapter will clarify the methodology to be adopted to test the overarching research question of the study.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The main purpose of writing a research methodology chapter is to summarise the individual project, detailing the entire process of conducting the research. This section discusses and analyses the formulated overarching research question and tests the equation for its validity. Moreover, this chapter justifies the methodologies used for analysing the collected data, which significantly contributes to the final findings.

The previous chapters introduced research problems, justified their significance, and proposed a framework and research activity that might help us to answer the research questions. To achieve this, certain research objectives have been framed, and then a structured questionnaire has been formulated in order to collect data for answering the research questions (see Appendix 2).

In regard to the objectives and the overarching research question of the research, the previous chapters have highlighted the concepts of globalisation, human capital and their role and impact on the economy of KSA. One of the key measures undertaken by the government of KSA has been an investment in training and skill development of the Saudi labour force. The research focuses on the case study of one such key initiative by the government. In this context, the KASP, which was launched in 2005 in KSA, has been the core focus of this research to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives taken by the government of KSA towards the development of human capital in the country. The

overarching research question for the research is 'How has the government of KSA sought to invest in human capital through the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP), and to what extent has the programme been successful?'

For the purpose of addressing this research question, this chapter will discuss the major research methods and procedures applied in this research, along with the underlying rationale for their application. The effective framework of the research methods has helped in the organisation of data collection methods and in structuring the research findings in an appropriate manner, so that logical and relevant conclusions can be drawn. The research design is an integral part of this methodology chapter, which outlines the research questions. The purpose of defining the research design is to give details of the data collection process and the techniques that will be used, in order to analyse the gathered data and provide the answers to design questions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007).

4.2 Research Methods

The research process is full of dilemmas. The most difficult phase is choosing an appropriate research strategy and deciding on methods for attaining answers to the research questions in order to reach strong conclusions. While, at times, it is possible to resolve some of the difficulties in choosing an appropriate research strategy, identifying a strategy that directly aligns with the research project is not always straightforward (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000).

McGrath (1981) defined the term 'dilemmatic' as 'a methodological approach founded on the idea that there exists no fool-proof solution to real-life problems, rather, "solutions" are in fact a series of compromises.' Different research strategies are interrelated in one way or another, but the primary focus of all

strategies is fundamentally different (Gill and Johnson, 2002). For example, action research is concerned with issues of utilisation, survey research deals with generality, experimental research focuses on precision, and ethnographic research addresses the character of particular contexts.

Scholars have offered a range of views regarding possible solutions to these differences. Morgan's (1983) work is based on the work of Churchman (1971), Feyerabend (1975) and Mason and Mitroff (1981), and sets out five approaches to address the application of various research strategies. The first approach tries to identify an evaluator test, which determines the merits of the research strategy, although this approach raises issues with relativism. The second approach deals with the integration of strategies, in order to carve out some common ground. This approach, however, does not easily align with paradigmatic research, in which different individuals consider the same problem from their differing perspectives. The third approach suggests that knowledge and assumption must be based on usefulness (Anderson, 2010). This is a contingent approach for attaining an optimal solution that depends on the practical utility to the interest it serves. The fourth approach shows that dilemmas are inevitable, and one must apply alternate solutions so as to reach a final outcome. The fifth approach is based on relativism, which means that each research strategy offers one or another solution (Gill and Johnson, 2002).

Thus, in the real world, there is no interdependency between the different research strategies. Therefore, triangulation, a multi-method strategy, must be adopted to incorporate the strengths of alternative strategies and overcome the weaknesses.

The methodologies used in this research are taken from the 'research onion' proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007). The metaphor 'onion' is used to describe the various steps of the research process. Like an onion with several layers, a research process also consists of several stages or layers. In order to proceed to the next step, it is essential for the researcher to complete the previous step. In Saunders' view, a research process starts with the research philosophy, which is the outermost layer, followed by a research approach as a second layer and research strategy as the third stage. The fourth stage of the research process involves research choices; the fifth stage is the time horizon and the sixth stage is the data collection method (Saunders, 2003).

When conducting research, it is essential for the researcher to give proper consideration to the research philosophy, ontology and epistemology. All these parameters reveal various factors about the beliefs, perceptions, assumptions and realities or truths, which can have a significant impact on the entire research design. Discussing these terms ensures that research biases are understood, exposed and minimised. As James and Vinnicombe (2002) argue, different people have different inherent preferences that shape the design of their research. Further, Blaikie (2000) cautions that the researcher must consider these parameters at the time of conducting research. There must be alignment between all of the parameters in order to connect them to the original research problem. Ignorance of this may result in a lack of coherence (Badke, 2012).

Blaikie (1993) argues that all of these parameters are well connected to social science. Furthermore, Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) feel that, because of different philosophies, researchers are bound to study phenomena in various ways. This

shows that by observing the same phenomena through different perspectives, various kinds of knowledge are derived.

4.3 Research Philosophy

A research philosophy implies the set of concepts, values, perceptions and assumptions held by a community of research scholars. The very first step in initiating the research process is defining a research philosophy that deals with the nature of the research and knowledge creation (Mack, 2010). It provides a specific focus and direction to the study and facilitates a more explicit examination of the social phenomenon and thus helps in providing a basis to justify the assumption. A research paradigm is highly significant in clarifying the structure of the research enquiry and selection of appropriate methodology to conduct the research in the right direction and address the research objectives logically. The two key elements of the research paradigm are ontology and epistemology (Levers, 2013).

4.3.1 Ontology

Blaikie (1993) defines ontology as 'the science or study of being' and develops this description for the social sciences to encompass 'claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other'. In other words, it can be said that ontology describes our views regarding the reality of nature – either objective reality or subjective reality – as perceived by different human beings (Baiche and Walliman, 2001). Ontology implies to the study of existence. The key assumptions of the ontological philosophy are related to the elements that define what reality is. In the context of the ontological aspects of research, the researcher examines perceptions about the way in which

things exist and operate (Mack, 2010). There are several embedded ontological assumptions that impact on the overall research process and, therefore, it is essential for the researcher to identify and consider these underlying assumptions. Otherwise, a researcher may be blinded to certain aspects of the situation and may not consider them for discussion. While examining all of the views regarding a particular situation, another problem that arises is how to measure reality and how to gain knowledge of that reality. This situation leads to questions of epistemology (Baiche and Walliman, 2001).

Under the ontological aspects of research philosophy, the two kinds of philosophy are objectivist and constructivist. This research has followed the objectivist paradigm because the study has investigated the effectiveness of human capital investment towards the fulfilment of the economic policy goals of KSA in a value-neutral manner. In addition to this, the impact of the scholarship programme on development of skills and capabilities has been examined and evaluated by keeping the research independent of the personal perceptions and opinions of the researcher. The application of this approach has not only helped in developing an objective research study but has also helped in deriving logical conclusions from the literature on human capital and globalisation.

4.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is closely coupled with ontology and considers the most appropriate ways for enquiring into the nature of the world, knowledge, and the sources and limits of knowledge (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008). It is related to the nature and form of knowledge and its assumptions rely upon the ways in which knowledge can be collected and communicated. It enquires about

the fundamental relationship between a knower and what aspects of the research problem can be known (Scotland, 2012). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) suggest that epistemology provides ideas regarding how knowledge can be produced or argued. On the other hand, Blaikie (1993) feels that epistemology is the science or theory of methods of knowledge. Chia (2002) argues that epistemology is 'how and what it is possible to know'. Further, it also deals with the methods through which reliable and verifiable knowledge is produced.

Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) define epistemology as 'knowing how you can know', and further, to understand how knowledge is generated and on what parameters one can differentiate between good knowledge and bad knowledge. They also draw interrelationships between epistemology and ontology. All of these discussions lead to three key research paradigms: positivist, interpretivist and realist (Bell, 2010).

4.3.2.1 Positivist

The philosophy of positivism is derived from natural science and deals with the testing of hypotheses developed from existing knowledge and theories. Thus, positivist philosophy is deductive in nature as it tests theories. The paradigm states that only the only valid facts are those that are universal, based on observation of external reality and explain a cause and effect relationship. According to positivist philosophy, there is only one single solution available to a given problem and that solution must be universally acceptable (Chapman and McNeill, 2005). This philosophy is purely based on truth, valid reason, facts and observations, and experience based on quantitative methods, such as experiments, surveys and statistical analysis (Blaikie, 1993; Saunders Lewis and

Thornhill, 2007; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) believe that a positivist philosophy is apt in an organisational context, as whatever happens in an organisation can be gauged through scientific measurement of the behaviour of the system and people of the organisation. It is also known as scientific philosophy (Creswell, 2003).

4.3.2.2 Interpretivist

As defined by Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), the philosophy of interpretivism is antipositivist, which means it is not scientific in nature. Blaikie (1993) regards this paradigm as post-positivist, as he believes that there is a significant difference between social science and the subject of matters of nature. Blaikie (1993) believes that in a community, different people have different thoughts, expectations, memories, experience and perceptions. Thus, there is not an exact solution to any real world problem, and the solution keeps on changing with time and experience. Different people have different views and these interpretations create a social reality (Creswell, 2009). This paradigm, therefore, focuses more on meaning and understanding the factors that determine and affect individual interpretations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). The people who follow this philosophy believe that there is more than one reality. Thus, it can be said that in inductive philosophy or theory building, all knowledge is relative to the knower (Hatch and Cunliffe 2006). In this, the researcher focuses on interpreting or understanding the meaning of social actors and understanding the situation from the viewpoint of a common person. Thus, this philosophy cannot be generalised as it is highly contextual (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). Since this paradigm is subjective in nature and has a greater emphasis on language, feeling

and people's thinking, it is generally associated with a qualitative research approach (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). This philosophy may invoke the researcher's personal bias; hence, the use of self-reflection is advised while employing this paradigm in a research process.

4.3.2.3 Realist

The over-deterministic nature of positivism and relativist nature of interpretivism gave rise to another paradigm, known as realism, which shares features with both of the above-stated philosophies. According to this paradigm, knowledge is created socially and there exists a real structure, which is independent of human consciousness. In the view of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), knowledge regarding the reality of life is due to social conditioning. As per Blaikie (1993), apart from science and observation, there are also certain other realities, some of which are still not proven. Like interpretivism, a realist philosophy believes that nature and social science are two different streams of life, and social reality is pre-interpreted. However, it also shares the positivist perspective that science must be empirically based (Daff, 2011). Thus, this philosophy focuses on the fact that social objects must be treated scientifically, and only on the basis of discourse and language.

Positivists believe in causal relationships that are universally applicable, whereas realists believe that, as per the circumstances, things have to behave in a certain manner and, thus, one must focus more on understanding and explanation, rather than simply prediction. According to Blaikie (2000), realism is 'ultimately a search for generative mechanisms'. From the above discussion, it can be said that realism may be considered as inductive or theory building, as it forces the

researcher to research from different angles and at multiple levels and, thus, contributes towards understanding (Blaikie, 2000).

This study adopts an interpretivist position, where it addresses educational reform in KSA in the context of globalisation and/or the globalised economy. Specifically, this study focuses on higher educational reform within KSA and its role in servicing the needs of the country's labour market and employment requirements, to achieve long-term economic reform. This involves a detailed case study of the KASP as a governmental initiative in human capital investment and a political strategy. It is argued that it is vital to examine the programme with regard to human capital investment, as mentioned in previous chapters of this study.

KASP aims to meet the needs of the Saudi labour market through an extensive programme of training and development of the young generation in KSA and to provide the next generation of Saudi business people and entrepreneurs. A key aim of this thesis is to test the effectiveness of the scheme in meeting its stated objectives. Further, this work examines which factors affect the different information accumulated from the respondents; the research aims to understand individual and shared meanings, instead of determining the causal effect or explaining the underlying mechanism.

The overall nature of the research is quite descriptive and comprehensive in order to reveal the basic and interpretive information from various sources, so that the effective nature of training and development in programmes within KSA can be reflected in the most precise manner. In addition to this, there is ample research available on the topic, which can be reflected in the most efficient

manner. Different perspectives arise through the research and require a detailed understanding of the various literature and theories related to the concepts of training and development of human capital in KSA. The philosophy of interpretivism, therefore, proves quite suitable and effective for this research. In combination with the interpretivist philosophy, the research makes use of a positivist philosophy because this study involves the use of objective and critical research methods to investigate and evaluate the prevailing information on globalisation and human capital development. This is achieved with the help of a survey and interviews, and simultaneously includes an in-depth examination of the key literature on human capital investment. A combination of the two paradigms is highly suitable and useful for the research because it allows objective analysis and detailed examination of the research findings in an appropriate manner, so as to obtain a rational conclusion. In addition to that, the combination of the two paradigms is also consistent with the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods followed this research (Scotland, 2012).

4.4 Research Approach

Basically, there are four main approaches to conducting a research project: quantitative, qualitative, pragmatic and advocacy or participatory. Out of these four approaches, the qualitative approach and the quantitative approach are the most frequently used. In general, research approaches are defined as plans and procedures formulated for conducting research that initiates from broad assumptions and concludes with data collection, analysis and interpretation. A researcher needs to make several decisions regarding which approach should be adopted while conducting a study (Dey, 2002).

4.4.1 Qualitative Research

This type of research approach is generally associated with an interpretivist or social constructivist philosophy. Qualitative research deals in recording, analysing and uncovering the significance and meaning of human experiences and behaviour, such as emotions, behaviours and beliefs. In such research, the main aim is to gather information regarding human behaviour and to understand the experiences of people, so as to generalise them with respect to other groups (Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative research is generally inductive in nature; this means a qualitative approach is based on bottom-up reasoning. Thus, in such studies, the researcher develops theories and patterns on the basis of collected information. In other words, it can be said that in inductive reasoning, a person moves from a specific situation to a more generalised environment. However, most research involves deductive as well as inductive reasoning (Muijis, 2010).

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is not based on pre-determined hypotheses. Qualitative research clearly defines the topic and the problem to be explored, and the researcher formulates a framework based on the theory for the investigation. Further, in qualitative studies, a researcher has greater flexibility regarding data collection, and collection and analysis are methodical. Data is not numerical, but rather in textual form, and is collected from observation and interaction with respondents, such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus groups, etc. This kind of data cannot be converted into a numerical form, and thus, cannot be analysed statistically (Newman and Benz, 1998).

For qualitative research, the researcher needs to accumulate data in several stages. As this method provides flexibility, the researcher can add or drop any question or issues, as per the requirements, at any stage of the research process. The researcher interviews the given set of respondents until no new issues emerge. During the data collection, the researcher has to provide complete freedom to the respondent. Participants can respond as per their choice and the researcher cannot force them to select from a set of pre-determined responses (Pennink and Jonker, 2010).

Moreover, it is essential to create the right atmosphere for the respondents to participate. Thus, unlike a quantitative approach, in qualitative research, the researcher will adopt a less rigid and more informal approach. Qualitative research is less narrow, more open-ended and more exploratory than quantitative, as the researcher has little knowledge on the subject under consideration. Moreover, this kind of research provides more freedom to the researcher, so that they can explore beyond the initial responses and can ask how, why, in what way, etc. Thus, the questions are tailored as per the responses of the respondents (Rasinger, 2008).

Qualitative research is characterised by a small number of respondents. This is because, in such studies, data is collected through methods such as in-depth interviews, which are time consuming and labour intensive for the researcher, and practically it is not possible for the researcher to interview a large number of people. Furthermore, unlike a quantitative approach, the researcher does not have to perform statistical analysis, so there is no need to collect an enormous amount of data. However, these studies must not be considered less scientific due

to the smaller number of participants or greater flexibility; rather, their findings are as reliable and valid as those of quantitative research. Moreover, although both research approaches are based on different philosophical assumptions, it does not mean that they cannot be practiced in a single study (Reilly and Harrison, 2011).

In the present case, mixed approaches for data collection have been used: a quantitative survey and qualitative focus groups and semi-structured interviews, to accumulate appropriate, reliable and valid data. Thus, much of the collected data is in textual form and cannot be analysed by applying any mathematical equations or statistical analysis. Further, this approach also provides greater flexibility to make changes in the interview questions, as per the responses of the participants, so as to collect more appropriate information.

4.5 Research Purpose

Research design serves as a comprehensive framework for the research, within which the data for the study is collected, examined, analysed and interpreted to address the research questions in a logical manner. It helps in aligning the research problems with the empirical findings of the research (Yin, 2003). There are three main categories into which research can be divided: explanatory, exploratory and descriptive. The type of classification is dependent on the formation of research questions; that is, what results can be obtained after conducting the research and in what ways will these results be used? (Yin, 2003)

Exploratory research is employed in projects where the researcher tries to understand a scenario that is new to society. Such research is conducted on topics on which not much work has been done in the past, and hence, there is a

limited amount of background information on the area under study. Thus, for such work, a new insight is needed. The main reason behind conducting such work is to accumulate as much data as possible on the research topic. As per Saunders, there are three main methods for conducting exploratory research: conducting focused group interviews, talking to experts in the field, and surveying the literature (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007).

The second research purpose is descriptive, which is conducted specifically to depict the profile of an event or a person. Thus, it is used for those research projects where the problem is well stated and appropriately structured, and it is not essential for the researcher to determine the cause and effect relationship between the factors (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007).

Finally, explanatory research aims to evaluate the cause and effect relationship between variables and explain the effect of variations in each variable on other variables and on the system as a whole. Thus, this kind of research is contrary to descriptive research; a researcher adopts this method when they need to show the effect of one variable over another, in order to draw a cause and effect relationship between them (Yin, 2003).

As the research involves the use of both literature and expert opinion for data collection, there is a combination of both exploratory and explanatory research. On the basis of existing literature and views of experts, the research proposes a hybrid model, which also suggests investigating the situation from various angles. The prime focus of the presented research work is to elaborate upon the impact of training and development programmes on the efficiency and effectiveness of the human capital employed by business organisations. The key

aim of the work is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of different crucial aspects of the training and development programmes, which will be helpful for business organisations in terms of their long-term success and effectiveness. The solution will allow a business organisation to develop desirable competencies and skills in the existing, highly competitive business environment.

This research has involved application of exploratory research design in combination with explanatory research design because it is useful in obtaining a detailed and in-depth view of the research problem that seeks to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the investment in human capital made by the government of KSA in meeting policy goals (Wimmer and Dominick, 2010). The application of secondary sources of relevant and reliable data about human capital, globalisation and a case study of KASP has allowed integration of the secondary data with the primary findings of the scholarship programme. Such integration of data with the help of exploratory and explanatory research has allowed for the acquisition of appropriate information and creation of a rational theoretical foundation about human capital investment in KSA. Further, exploratory research has been useful and suitable because this research has studied a real-life phenomenon relating to the role of human capital investment in the growth, development and diversification of the economy of KSA (Edmonds and Kennedy, 2012). The descriptive research method was not suitable for this research because it would not have allowed for the study of primary data and analysis of the scholarship programme in an analytical and objective manner. Another method such as diagnostic research could not have been applied because the research does not require collection and analysis of findings with the help of experiment or observation (Wimmer and Dominick, 2010).

4.6 Research Questions

The data collected for this thesis should answer the following questions with regard to skills acquirement, the empowerment of women, the role of the Cultural Bureau and acceptance of change when studying in developed countries (both of which are necessary for labour market reform):

1. How does KASP help Saudi students in learning to adapt to cultural change and in acquiring new soft skills while studying in an open and advanced society? How willing are the students to engage with a new cultural environment and what challenges do they encounter when trying to do so?

2. Does KASP facilitate gender equality by providing career and skill development opportunities to Saudi women? What are the obstacles facing female students taking part in KASP and how do these affect the quality and the outcome of the programme?

3. Is the Ministry of Education represented by the Cultural Bureau supportive of Saudi students taking part in KASP? Does the Bureau effectively help students overcome such obstacles and develop their knowledge and expertise?

The design and strategy for the research have been determined in a way that the above-enumerated research questions can be addressed appropriately.

4.7 Research Strategy

Defining a research strategy is crucial from a researcher's point of view. This is the third layer of the research onion suggested by Saunders (2003) as the key stage of the research process. The data collection process and method, based on the research objective and research questions, is entirely dependent on this layer.

4.7.1 Validity and Reliability

It is essential for the researcher to accumulate valid and reliable data so as to reach concrete findings that are accepted by all. Moreover, in case study research, it is essential for the researcher to maintain validity and reliability so as to make it bias-free. Denscombe (2002) and Miles and Huberman (1994) believe that validity and reliability in research can be achieved by selecting an appropriate methodology.

4.7.1.1 Validity

The validity of the work lies in the accuracy of the research questions and the questions asked to the respondents at the time of data collection, as well as the explanation offered to them (Denscombe, 2002). The validity of content can be established by asking the right conceptual questions and adopting the correct indicators (Yin, 1994). While formulating the research questions, it was possible to obtain a clear idea of which areas had a dearth of information, and therefore, what data needed to be collected. This helps in bridging the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of human capital development. During the research, the available literature was extensively reviewed. Further, data collected from different agencies and individuals helped the researcher in justifying and refining the research inquiries (Sobh and Perry, 2006). In order to achieve accuracy in the final outcome, a data triangulation method was adopted which was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the quantitative data was analysed through statistical analysis, and in the second phase, qualitative data was analysed through thematic analysis. This leveraged the degree of construct validity. Data collection through various sources, including the literature review, questionnaire, focus groups and semi-structured

interviews, provided volumes of information on the concept of human capital and human capital development in KSA (Sobh and Perry, 2006).

4.7.1.2 Reliability

In the words of Cooper and Schindler (1998), reliability refers to 'the degree to which alternative forms of the same measure produce the same or similar results'. It assesses whether or not the features of research design are in line with the research questions. In this work, since the researcher was interested in determining the 'how' and 'what' aspects of research questions, the case study approach was correctly adopted (Yin, 1994). Further, it was important to be mindful of collecting data from various sources so that the data could respond to the research questions. Moreover, to enhance the reliability of the collected data, the data sets collected through interviews and questionnaires were cross-checked. While designing the questions, the researcher focused on addressing some of the important issues of human capital development in KSA and KASP. Thus, for maintaining data reliability, a multidimensional approach to human capital theory was adopted (Levy and Lemeshow, 2011).

According to Saunders (2003), there are six potential research strategies: experiment, action, survey, case study, ethnography and grounded theory. The potential application of each strategy is assessed on three criteria: internal validity, external validity and reliability, as proposed by Gill and Johnson (2002) and Denscombe (2007). Internal validity refers to whether the proposition identified as a cause actually has a similar effect as the interpreted causes. External validity means the extent to which a researcher can generalise or extrapolate the results beyond the scenario in which the work was conducted.

Population validity means whether the outcomes from the selected sample can be generalised to the entire population or a set from a different population. Ecological validity is the degree to which the results can be generalised from the actual settings (Seymour, 2001). Finally, reliability means replicating the same research under the same research conditions and design. On the basis of these parameters, a framework is proposed so as to determine the appropriateness and suitability of the six potential strategies.

The experimental research design is a blueprint of the steps involved in the research process that enable a researcher to test the defined hypothesis, in order to reach authentic and valid conclusions regarding cause and effect relationships between the dependent and independent variables. It defines the conceptual framework within which the experiments are conducted.

In action research, the researcher follows a characteristic cycle. In this context, the researcher conducts a study by adopting the exploratory method so as to develop an understanding of a real problem faced by the society in question and, accordingly, some planning is done in the form of an intervention strategy. While carrying out the intervention or actions, data is collected through observations in various forms. On the basis of findings from the collected data, intervention strategies are carried out and the cycle keeps on rotating until there is a comprehensive understanding of the problem, or some valid and authentic implementation of the solution to the problem (Sobh and Perry, 2006). Thus, this research design is cyclic in nature and develops deeper insight into the given situation. It starts from conceptualisation and progresses to evaluation, through several interventions.

In a case study research design, a researcher, instead of going through several statistical and mathematical analyses or comprehensive comparative inquiries, conducts an in-depth study of the area under research. The main purpose of such research is to narrow down a very broad field, by studying a few easily accessible examples. It is basically used to test whether a certain model or theory is applicable to the real life situation or not. This research design is also used when there is a dearth of information available to the researcher.

Another important research design is survey research. In such projects, the researcher assesses feelings, thoughts and opinions of the individuals questioned. This kind of research can be limited and specific in nature or may have a global approach. It is the most common research design in sociological and psychological studies, as such work analyses behaviour. A survey research design uses a predefined set of questionnaires sent to participants. In this, a sample is selected from the entire population whose attitude and characteristics are representative (Turner, 2010).

An ethnographic research design observes the target user in their real world and natural setting, rather than testing them in the artificial environment of a lab or focus group. The basic purpose of conducting such research is to determine how people live, how they see things and use them, what they do, or what things they need for comfortable living. This kind of research relies on video diaries, contextual interviews, observations, photographs, etc. and some artefacts such as paper forms or tools frequently used by the individuals. As noted, observation is not conducted in a lab; rather it can be done at work, home or in leisure environments (Vogt, 2007). Furthermore, it is not necessary

to study a person individually; they can be studied in families, with colleagues, or as a part of a group of friends. Although a single individual may be recruited to gain detailed information, several people related to the individual may also be studied.

Finally, those projects that involve forming a theory based on accumulated data, rather than forming a theory then accumulating data, adopt a grounded theory research design. This design turns the whole research process around. It is so named because the theory is grounded in the data. The greatest strength of this design is that it remains unaffected by a researcher's bias; it avoids the possibility that a researcher may change the outcome of the experiment to fit the data and prove the theory. Since data is collected first and then the theory is formed, there are negligible chances of bias (Williams and Scandura, 2000).

With respect to the research strategy, this research has applied the case study method, which focuses on obtaining an in-depth understanding of a particular event or entity at a given period of time. It is a highly effective method to gather information with the help of observation of a single participant or a set of participants and allows for a detailed examination of the major subject of research. It is a fundamental component of exploratory research conducted in the field of social, economic and behavioural issues (Johansson, 2003). As this research focuses on socio-economic aspects of the economy of KSA, this method has been identified to be a most suitable method for gathering research specific data. For this purpose, the case study of KASP, which represents a significant contribution to the government of KSA towards investment in human capital,

has been chosen to address the research questions about the effectiveness of such investments in human capital by the government (Woodside, 2010).

However, case studies deal with the conclusions derived from one case, as a result, the applicability of the conclusions drawn from other cases cannot be ensured. This further indicates that ability to generalise the findings to a wider population is low under the case study strategy (Johansson, 2003). To offset this shortcoming of this method of data collection and analysis, the case study method has been supported by other primary data collection methods such as survey, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The combination of these methods with the case study method has helped in maintaining the credibility and reliability of the research and removing the bias in the research (Yin, 2013).

4.8. A Case Study Approach: Justification of a Single Case Design

My main motive of this thesis is to study the process of human capital development in KSA; therefore, a single case study of KASP was selected. Due to this, it was possible to extensively analyse empirical investigations. Constraints such as time, money and access, meant there were few choices available to the researcher. On the basis of both primary and secondary data, various candidates with experience of studying abroad through the scholarship programme were selected.

The main aim of the case study approach is to examine an existing trend within its real life context. This is more appropriate in those cases where there is a certain confusion regarding the boundaries between context and phenomenon (Yin, 1994). There are two main reasons why the case study approach is

appropriate for this work. Firstly, there is a potential gap between what is endorsed and what is promoted in human capital development (Gratton et al., 1999). Thus, there has been a lack of connection between the context and the phenomenon. Secondly, the work examines the 'how' and 'what' research questions, on the grounds that the researcher has no control over a modern set of trends (Yin, 1994).

Regarding the case study research design, the researcher closely examined the characteristics of a single case or multiple cases. Thus, the main objective of adopting this method is to learn from the given case, rather than to replicate the case or generalise it (Stake, 1995). In the view of Eisenhardt (1991):

> *The concern is not whether two cases are better than one, or four better than three. Rather, the appropriate number of cases depends on upon how much is known and how much new information is likely to be learned from incremental cases.*

Further, since there are constraints of finance, time and information, a single case study with multiple units of analysis is apt for this study for the following reasons.

The single case enables the researcher to attain the objective of the research. For tackling the research questions, it is beneficial for the researcher to select a case that allows her/him to explore and measure the required area under study. For the selected case, the organisation should have adopted human capital initiatives at a significant level. Moreover, the proposed case itself has qualities that provide an interesting research objective to be studied (Pettigrew, 1990). The case study adopted here is inimitable and makes an immense contribution towards theoretical development.

A single case is related to a single experiment and can prove to be a critical case. From the literature review, it can be concluded that the area of human capital development is still not researched properly and that there are tremendous possibilities to explore this area. Therefore, it is essential to conduct a process oriented study (Patton, 2002).

The aim of the research process is to understand the basic concept for which the research is being conducted (Patton, 2002; King, Keohane and Verba, 1994; Yin, 1994). It helps the researcher to gather data in a logical sequence and to analyse it properly. Thus, it enables the systematic completion of the entire research process. According to Yin's work (1994), the basic components of the research design for a case study are research questions, units of analysis, and accumulation of information in a logical sequence and the process of interpreting the findings. Eisenhardt (1989) added a further element to this and proposed the process of building a theory from case study research, in conjunction with the above components.

The case study research design has served to be highly effective in examining the development of human capital in KSA within a globalised economy. In this regard, for a focused and relevant analysis, the research has sought to examine the education reform in the Kingdom as a key tool for human capital investment (HCI) to evaluate the contribution of the government in improving human capital. Therefore, the application of a single case study of KASP has helped in assessing the extent to which the human capital programmes are under developed and might prevent the successful accomplishment of the policy goals. The case study research design has also been useful for the research because it has been helpful

in exploring the key factors of globalisation such as the economy, education, unemployment and governance, which have been influencing the Arabian nations. In addition to that, it has also been helpful in examining the major aspects associated with human capital and the role of the government of KSA in preparing the country to manage the challenges posed by globalisation.

The research process adopted in this work has three main phases: phase one is research formulation, phase two is data collection and phase three is data analysis.

4.8.1 Phase 1: Research Formation

After reviewing the literature on human capital (Gratton and Ghoshal, 2003; Truss, 2001; Fitz-enz, 2000; Rastogi, 2000; Gratton et al. 1999; Lepak and Snell, 1999; Legge, 1995 and Nordhaug, 1993), it can be seen that it is essential for the researcher to conduct research inquiries so as to gain a better understanding of the concepts of human capital. Reviewing the existing literature in this field helps to elucidate the concept of human capital research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002). On the basis of this, the researcher can determine the gap existing in the field of research.

4.8.1.1 Research inquiries

The proposed work focuses on educational reform in KSA, in the context of globalisation and/or the globalised economy. Specifically, the thesis focuses on higher education reform in KSA and its role in servicing the needs of the country's labour market and employment requirements, as noted above. This involves a detailed case study of KASP as a governmental initiative into human capital investment.

The programme aims to meet the needs of the Saudi labour market through an extensive programme of training and development and to provide the next generation of Saudi businesspeople and entrepreneurs. A key aim of this thesis is to test the effectiveness of the scheme in meeting its stated objectives. Thus, it evaluates the gaps between rhetoric and reality regarding human capital development in KSA. Zbaracki (1998) defined rhetoric and reality as 'the relationship between what people say [...] and what people do'. In this study, rhetoric and reality refer to the goals and aims of the programme and what the students say and experience in regard to these goals.

Here, the researcher focuses on educational reforms in KSA and whether the scholarship programme and the nation's current educational system are capable of producing world-class human capital. Is the human capital of KSA competent enough to compete with the human capital of other parts of the world?

The Saudi authorities do have a reform programme based on their five-year development plans and it has invested heavily in its schools, universities and vocational training to improve its economic performance. The problem is a domestic educational or supply sector steeped in rote teaching and religious instruction. Whilst the government has paid considerable attention to the challenges posed by a changed global economic context, the extent to which it has considered how the educational support or supply system should be reformed, alongside this new approach, is less clear. This may ultimately create problems in the delivery of key economic reform goals. If the education system remains subject to the veto of traditionalist interests, the government may not be able to deliver its wider economic goals. Therefore, this project is concerned with

examining how the Saudi government has adopted its educational system to match the demands of globalisation and the need for a more diverse and skilled workforce. It is concerned with examining how reformist tendencies associated with King Abdullah fare against those elements suspicious of change and the 'Westernisation' of Saudi educational policy. Where is reform taking place? What form is it taking? How does it change from one area to another? How distinct is it from the past?

4.8.1.2 Units of analysis and measurement

Students of KASP have been chosen specifically for this study, to examine their experience of the programme. They are the basis and the focus of the analysis and measurement. The main reason for focusing on students as units of analysis is to determine sources of data and to target the research inquiries (Patton, 2002). Further, the researcher needs to be very clear regarding the measurement levels, so as to accumulate appropriate data (Easter by-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002).

4.8.2 Phase Two: Data Collection

Phase two of the research deals with collecting authentic, valid and appropriate data. Thus, this phase is also known as the data collection stage. In order to justify the appropriateness of the research, the researcher discusses the methodological options and their implications. The nature of research inquiries, the purpose of the study and the strengths and weaknesses in each methodological application are some of the factors the researcher considers while selecting the appropriate methodology. On the basis of this, it becomes easy for the researcher to ensure the credibility of the final outcome. In this

assessment, quality, validity and reliability methods are applied, as discussed in the later part of this section. Further, to achieve consistency and to enhance the depth and scope of the methodological proceedings, a special technique of triangulation is conceptualised, so as to validate the final results (Patton, 2002). The subsequent paragraphs discuss the themes of data triangulation for investigating the case study, and the validity and reliability associated with the research.

4.8.2.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is a combination of two or more data collection methods, so as to negate the weaknesses of all of the single methods adopted. Through this, the pitfalls and biases of different methodologies are counterbalanced in order to leverage validity (Jick, 2002). The most challenging situation for the researcher is to select the most appropriate and productive methodology. There are various triangulation topologies. However, methodological triangulation and data triangulation are the most frequently employed methods (Denzin, 1989, 1978). Data triangulation concerns the use of different sources of data for crosschecking the consistency of the collected data. This involves comparing the viewpoints of employees working at different management levels with corporate initiative documents. On the other hand, methodological triangulation refers to the adoption of various methods for studying a similar case. The present study adopts Yin's (1994) idea, as it utilises a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data, thereby eliminating the biases (Jick, 1995). Both of the employed research methods complement each other (Seale, 1999). This has significantly helped in increasing the validity of the data and robustness of the final outcome (Snow and Thomas, 1994). Throughout the data collection process, the researcher employed

focus groups, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis for accumulating reasonable data.

4.8.2.1.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire related to the research questions was organised in order to assemble primary data regarding human capital development, its concepts and practices in KSA and the implementation of the KASP (see Appendix 2). A questionnaire technique for data collection was then adopted to enhance the validity of the data, as data from focus groups may not be rich enough to establish grounded work (Gratton et al., 1999). The data collected through the questionnaire provides additional support for qualitative analysis. However, it is not capable of testing theories on human capital. The two main reasons for adopting questionnaire methods are: firstly, to diversify the selected sample and, secondly, to generate voluntary interviews. A check-box option was provided in the questionnaire for respondents to declare whether they would be happy to participate in the interview process. This helped in screening the number of interviewees and provided a platform for the participants who wanted to speak more about the issues related to human capital in KSA and KASP outcomes, in terms of the soft skills needed for the reform of the workplace in KSA.

The structured questionnaire was designed for collecting relevant information on human capital and the issues related to it (see Appendix 2), keeping in mind different groups of participants. The information collected through the questionnaire on human capital was further strengthened by the relevant literature review (Gratton et al., 1999; Lepak and Snell, 1999; Legge, 1995; Nordhaug, 1993; Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982). The responses were

measured on a ten-point Likert scale (Robson, 2000) and follow-up emails were sent to those participants who did not submit their responses by the end of the first week. This helped in boosting the response rate. Later, the responses were systematically administrated. At the end of the survey period, between July and October 2015, a response rate of 62% was achieved.

4.8.2.1.2 Focus Group

The outcomes of the questionnaire helped in the conducting of focus groups. Focus group interviews were arranged with a number of students from the different USA and UK-based universities; the researcher chose to concentrate on these countries because the majority of KASP students were sent to the USA and the UK. The researcher travelled to KSA to conduct two focus groups in order to interview groups face to face and to let the students express themselves freely without the restrictions of technology. This section of the research concentrated on a key feature of the human capital literature – soft skills – to test themes such as Saudi assimilation into a different work and life culture, in this case, America and Western Europe.

The use of focus group interviews has been identified as a suitable means to gather data because it allows face-to-face involvement of the interviewer and the interviewee. This enables the researcher to gather detailed information regarding the subject of research. Since the discussion and interview take place in the form of a group activity; it serves as a suitable platform to allow discussion and generation of new ideas and perspectives on the subject of research. Therefore, focus group interviews were used as a key method to support the other two methods of survey and semi-structured interview to gather pertinent

opinions and perceptions of the students regarding the effectiveness of the human development programmes undertaken by the government of KSA.

As the impact on employment opportunities for Saudi women is a key feature of the thesis, questions specifically tailored towards a female perspective were developed. The aim was to consider the extent to which KASP has had a noticeable impact in terms of improving gender equality within the broader context of economic development. Attention was given to enrolment and graduation rates, as well as post-graduate employment history and experiences.

Interviewing of live subjects does raise ethical issues, therefore, the study applied for and received clearance from the university ethics board. The interviews for each focus group lasted almost two hours, depending on the number of participants involved and the amount of information shared by them. All data was recorded on a personal notepad and tape recorder then transcribed for final analysis and interpretation by using a content analysis technique.

Place and Date	Focus Group	Participants
Jeddah Park Hyatt Resort, Saudi Arabia 4/7/2015	Group 1	KASP graduates of both genders, from both USA and UK universities.
Reading University, United Kingdom 30/10/2015	Group 2	KASP students of both genders currently studying in the UK.
London Chesterfield Hotel, United Kingdom 8/8/2015	Group 3	A group of female KASP students currently studying in the UK (for the purpose of gathering information on the question of women's empowerment).
Alaan Exhibition and Restaurant, Riyadh, KSA 2/1/2016	Group 4	A group of male and female KASP graduates from USA and UK universities.

Table 2: Focus Groups

The outcomes of the focus interviews were very helpful in assembling the primary data regarding human capital development, its concepts and practices in KSA and the implementation of the KASP.

4.8.2.1.3 Semi-structured interviews

Flexible research designs employ a semi-structured interview method of data collection, for gaining deeper insight into respondents' perspectives on related areas (Flick, 2002; Robson, 2002). It is a non-standardised and most commonly used method for gathering primary data or qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews do not involve a high degree of interaction between interviewers and interviewees, yet they are used in many studies for the following two reasons: firstly, through this method an interviewer can gain communicative validation (Robson, 2002) and, secondly, the researcher can follow a certain theme throughout the process (Mason, 2002). Under this method in this current study,

the researcher used a list of major themes, issues and questions to cover in the interview, so that the overarching research question and objectives of the research could be addressed. The pre-developed interview questionnaire helped in directing the flow of the discussion during the interview; however the interviewer was able to revise the order of the questions depending upon the direction of the interview (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010). The major advantage of semi-structured interviews is to allow a prompt and deeper probe into the given situation regarding the subject of research (Flick, 2009). It also allows interviewees the freedom to express their opinions and perceptions freely, and thus serves as a reliable means to gather pertinent and comparable qualitative data for research (Drever, 2003).

In this work, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight students pursuing graduation under the KASP programme in the UK. The purpose was to examine human capital to cover the broad range of issues for further exploration. The purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews was to explore the perception and opinions of Saudi Arabian students regarding the role and significance of the scholarship programme undertaken by the government to improve human capital.

For successful completion of interviews in a geographically dispersed area, I travelled to KSA and undertook interviews there, and also adopted telephone interviews when needed. This method has many advantages; for example, it lowers the cost and time spent in collecting data, and moreover, both interviewers and interviewees enjoy a greater amount of flexibility. Despite these benefits, however, the researcher identified two drawbacks of this method.

Firstly, in building a relationship with participants and, secondly, in the lack of opportunity to study the body language of interviewees (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). As a result of this, there may be problems in interpretation. However, the researcher aimed to overcome this issue through communicative validation. In the present work, few challenges were faced while conducting interviews, as prior permission was obtained from the respondents regarding their willingness to participate. This shows that respondents were willing to share their views on human capital development in KSA and KASP.

The average duration of each interview was 40 minutes, depending on the schedules and talkativeness of the respondent. Interviews were conducted in the Arabic language to make it easier for the candidates to express themselves, and notes were taken on a notepad. The interview started with an initial introduction from the interviewer, followed by a brief explanation regarding the interview's purpose, and then the main questions related to human capital development in KSA and KASP. During the entire interview, ethical standards were maintained by not forcing any respondent to provide desired responses. In all cases, conversations were taped and then, on the same day, transcribed and translated into English, while it was possible to recall all of the information provided by the respondent.

Place and Date	Interviewee	Participants
United Kingdom, Norwich, UEA 6/10/2015	Male students: T1 - A	Male students of KASP, who are still studying in the UK.
United Kingdom, London, Down to Earth Café 29/8/2015 7/11/2015	Female students: F - R	Female students of KASP, who are still studying in the UK (for the purpose of discussing women's empowerment).
KSA 18/12/2015	1- Y 2- N1	Female graduates from the KASP who have joined the labour market in KSA
KSA 18/12/2015	1- T2	Male graduate from KASP who has joined the labour market in KSA
UK, London 14/1/2016	1- N2	Female student who is still studying in the UK

Table 3: Semi-Structured Interviews

4.8.2.1.4 Documentary Analysis

To further strengthen the information collected through various forms of data collection, documentation analysis was also performed, so as to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of human capital. Documentation analysis included examining corporate initiatives, HR policies, annual reports, company prospectuses, public press and employee surveys (Williams and Scandura, 2000). It is a method of social research analysis that serves as a tool to obtain supportive and valid facts about the research in the literature review chapter. It involves rigorous analytical reading and review of numerous academic and written materials.

In this research, documentary analysis was undertaken with the help of an extensive literature review, as covered in the first two chapters. In this regard, a thorough examination of the literature was undertaken on globalisation and the

challenge of reforms along with human capital. Extensive literature analysis was done on the impact and benefits of globalisation, the relationship between the Arab world and globalisation and reliance on oil, with the help of reports, academic papers and scholarly articles. With respect to human capital, the literature analysis was undertaken to examine economic performance and growth and measure the role of human capital in the growth and development of the economy. The overall documentary analysis in the form of an elaborate literature review has helped in achieving a detailed insight into the role of human capital in the growth and performance of an economy, and the extent and ways in which investment in it are significant for KSA.

4.8.3 Phase Three: Data Analysis

In the research, the qualitative investigation method was deemed to be appropriate, as the main aim was to discover individual perspectives on human capital. A multi-method approach for data analysis was adopted, utilising two different methods to reach a conclusion. The first technique involved qualitative data analysis, which analysed data collected from the documentary analysis and the interviews and focus groups. On the other hand, statistical analysis was performed on the data gathered through the questionnaire (Williams and Scandura, 2000). The combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis provides a more balanced approach, in comparison to a single method.
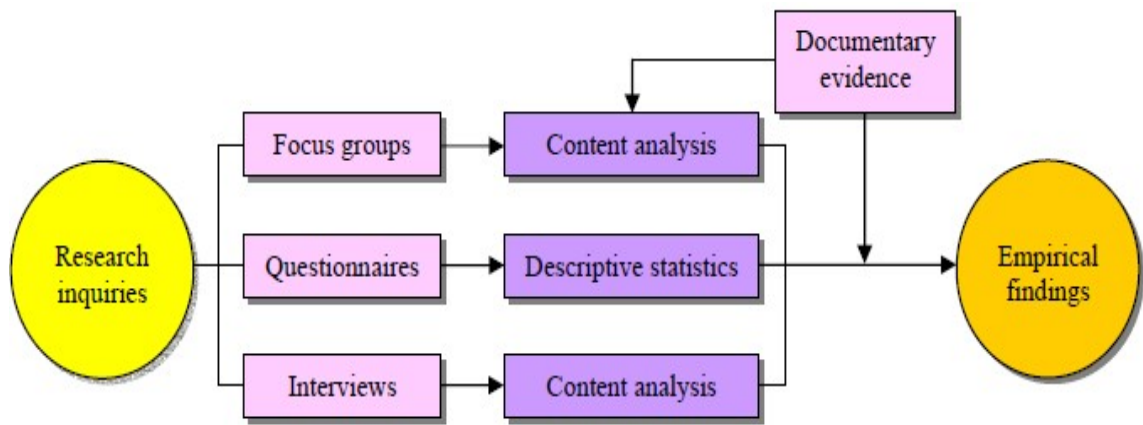
Figure 3: Data Analysis Process

The chart above shows that the first process in the data analysis phase is basically a statistical analysis for analysing data collected through questionnaires. The items in the questionnaire were systematically coded and a Likert rating system was used to reflect the degree of attitudinal preferences. The final score of the Likert scale is summed up and measured by applying certain statistical analysis. Combining the results of both qualitative and quantitative helps in gaining greater accuracy (Gill and Johnson, 2002).

In the second process, the data is analysed qualitatively in a sequential manner. Qualitative analysis converts an enormous amount of intangible data into a comprehensive model. According to Patton (2002), in qualitative analysis, the data is classified into different categories or with a coding system. This helps a researcher in evaluating their substantive connotation. In the present work, I employed thematic analysis; a content analysis technique that was developed by Patton (2002), Cooper and Schindler (1998) and Miles and Huberman (1994). It helps in determining the dimensions of human capital development.

4.9 Conclusion

The research methodology chapter proposed several issues related to research approaches and methods required to conclude the study successfully. The discussion regarding different methodologies helped in evaluating the focus of this Ph.D. research. Although when using a multiple case study approach a researcher can generalise the situation, it may not allow them to obtain a deep insight into the topic. Thus, a single case study approach was applied in this study. A triangulation approach was used so as to strengthen the validity and the reliability of the final outcomes. A three-phase data analysis model was employed for analysing data both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Chapter Five

Data Analysis and Findings

5.1 Introduction

The year 2015 marked the end of the first decade since the start of the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP), which was the governmental initiative to support human capital investment (HCI) in KSA. As mentioned in the second chapter of this study, there is a strong tie between knowledge and skills and the investment in human capital; it is not only about gaining a certificate or a degree, students need to gain valuable skills and learn to accept change.

Throughout this study, a working definition of HCI has been used, developed and described as the level of knowledge and skills gained through education, experience and interactions in developed countries, such as the UK and USA, where young Saudis are sent to learn and develop.

Human capital investment is considered a major engine for economic growth and reform. KSA is a rich country, but one where the economy relies predominantly on a single natural resource and, as a result of this, is likely to face what is called 'Dutch Disease'. This term was mentioned in the first chapter of this study and refers to the relationship between the increase in exploitation of natural resources and a decline in the manufacturing sector. KSA needs to diversify its economy away from decreasing oil reserves, and the solution is to concentrate on its people.

In this regard, as noted in the introduction to this study, HCI is a strategy put in place by the Saudi government to support the economic growth of the Kingdom;

KASP is a means through which to invest in young Saudis with the aim of contributing to reform and economic growth. A decade has passed since the programme started. Now that a generation has been educated in developed countries and many KASP students have returned home and joined the KSA workforce, it is the right time to evaluate the output of the programme in order to see how successful and viable its output is to the labour market. The programme will be extended until 2020, as mentioned in the third chapter of this research, and as Rist (1999, p.24) points out, 'It is believed that proper evaluation studies will improve accountability within government.'

Moynihan (2005) argues that, during the 1990s, the US state government reforms were associated with 'results' and 'performance'. Accountability is part of the KSA reform in government performance. This study pays close attention to the relationship between skills and the development of the labour market and this chapter provides an assessment of KASP. This process includes an evaluation of the responses received from KASP students, whether graduates or those still studying under the programme's sponsorship. The responses were collected through triangulated methods: a questionnaire was sent to more than 200 students in the UK and the USA; four focus groups were conducted with the KASP students who had studied in the UK and USA, and individual semi-structured interviews were carried out with both male and female Saudi students in the UK and the USA.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the overarching research question of this research relates to the Saudi government's claim that its educational reforms, including HCI, provide the supply side requirements to aid long-term economic alternatives

to oil revenues. This thesis seeks to test the strength of that claim with the following overarching research question: 'How has the government of KSA sought to invest in human capital through KASP, and to what extent has the programme been successful?'

This chapter analyses all of the data and information collected from the fieldwork and puts the data into perspective, with a view to demonstrating how adequate the programme is in responding to the demands of the labour market. It will consider what has worked and what has not, and why, and what key challenges have been faced during the implementation of reforms. The data will be broken down into constituent parts to obtain answers to research questions and to test the overarching research question; then findings will be provided to conclude this chapter. The recommendations for policymakers to take into consideration in future reform programmes will be introduced in the following chapter, alongside the conclusion of the thesis.

The most difficult phase of a research process is choosing an appropriate research strategy and methodology for attaining answers to the research questions, in order to reach relevant conclusions. For this study data was collected from three different sources, which is known as the triangular method. As outlined in the previous chapter, this is a multi-method strategy; a survey was conducted along with focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews.

A triangulation approach was used to strengthen the validity and the reliability of the final outcomes. In the next part of this chapter, the data will be analysed in detail. This begins with analysis of the questionnaire with responses from more than 200 participants, of both genders, studying in the UK and USA. Then, these

findings will support the findings of the questionnaire by providing a full analysis of data collected from the focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

5.2 Analysis of the Questionnaire

The survey was sent to KASP students in the UK and the USA and more than 200 responses were collected, in order to gain knowledge about the viability of KASP with regards to skills acquirement and change acceptance. Questions were related to age, gender, courses, skills and training acquired, and the role of the Cultural Attaché as a representative of the Ministry of Education. Responses are divided accordingly as follows.

5.2.1 Age
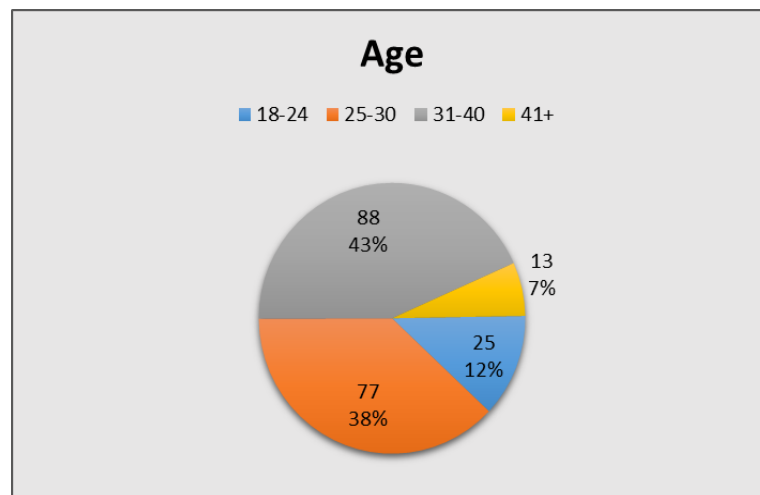
Figure 4: Age of respondents

It is important to know the average age of the students, because KASP was designed for the younger generation. It can be observed from Figure 4 that around 12% of the total respondents were in the age bracket 18-24 years, around 38.5% were aged between 25-30 years, 43% of the respondents belonged to the age group 31-40 years, and the remaining Saudi students (7%) were 40+ years of

age. Thus, the majority of respondents were from the age group of 31 to 40 years. However, the investment was actually meant to be for a younger generation. This indicates that not enough younger Saudis are involved in the programme and this has to be taken into consideration in further studies. From the analysis of the findings, it can be further concluded that a very small proportion of students above the age of 41 participate in the scholarship programme and it also indicates that a number of students take up the scholarship programme after the age of 25.

5.2.2 Gender
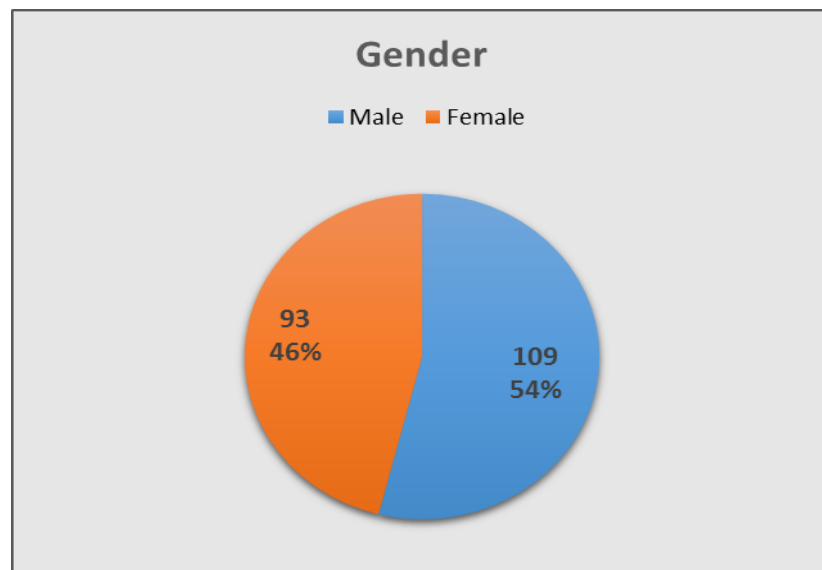
Figure 5: Gender

KASP is considered to be the first scholarship programme in the country where doors are open for females to have the opportunity to study abroad, and such opportunity was given equally to both genders. Although in the past, women were offered scholarships from the government, these were limited to health studies and only for outstanding students. For this reason, KASP is considered to

be a leap forward for women's right to equality in KSA as it is unconditionally open to all females. Therefore, it is important to see how attractive the programme is for females and how equal the chances offered to both genders. It can be observed from Figure 5 that 54% of the KASP students who participated in the survey were male, and the remaining 46% were female. Thus, there was a slight majority of male respondents participating in the survey. This will be checked in the focus groups and individual interviews to identify whether there have been any obstacles facing females in joining KASP.

5.2.3 Types of Courses under the Scholarship Programme
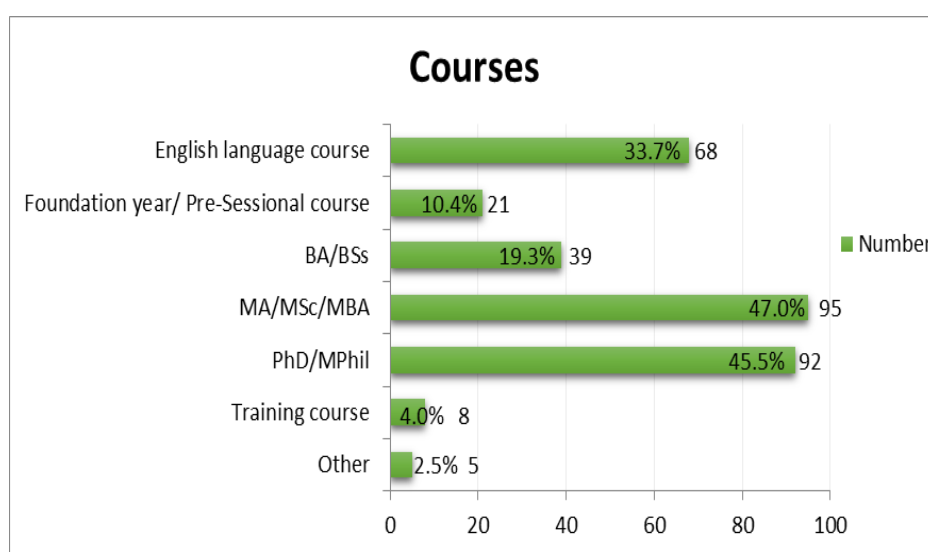
Figure 6: Types of Courses under the Scholarship Programme

Saudi students were asked about the kinds of courses they had undertaken or were currently pursuing as a part of their scholarship programme. The percentage of respondents undertaking an English language course was 33.7%, while 10.4% of students were taking a foundation year/pre-sessional course, 19.3% of respondents were undertaking BA/BSc courses and 47% were undertaking MA/MSc/MBA courses. Moreover, 45.5% of respondents replied

that they were undertaking a PhD/MPhil, while 4% opted for a training course and the remaining 2.5% respondents undertook other courses. Thus, it can be stated from the overall findings that the majority of Saudi students had undertaken or were pursuing MA/MSc/MBA courses. It also shows that training sessions were not emphasised in the programme's policy. This will be further tested in the focus groups and individual interviews with KASP students.

5.2.4 Time Duration of Studying Abroad
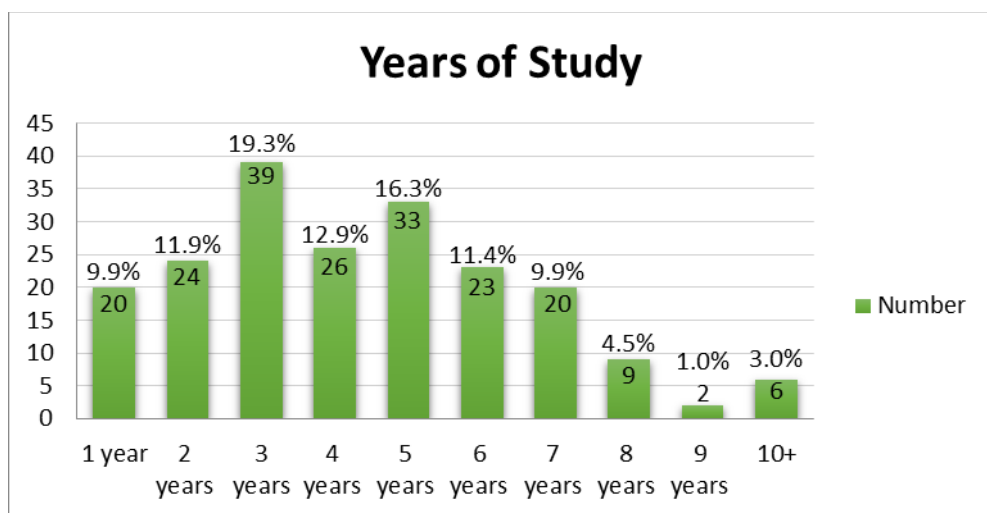
Figure 7: Time Duration of Studying Abroad

When KASP students were asked about the time duration of their study abroad, 9.9% stated that they had been studying abroad for one year, 11.9% opted for two years, while 19.3% stated they had studied three years. On the other hand, the students studying abroad for four years totalled 12.9%, and students studying abroad for five years added up to 16.3%; 11.4% of KASP students had been studying abroad for six years, while 9.9% of respondents stated seven years, 4.5% opted for eight years and 1% stated nine years. In addition to this, 3% of respondents said that they had been studying abroad for more than 10

years. Thus, overall findings indicate that the majority of the respondents had been studying abroad for about three to five years, which is enough to gain new skills and knowledge.

5.2.5 Skills

It is important to evaluate how the programme is helping Saudi students to achieve the skills required for the development of the labour market in times of globalisation and the global economy. As skills and knowledge form the core interest of this study, it is important to estimate how effective the HCI programme is in relation to this. To this end, participants were asked questions about acquiring skills from learning abroad and interacting with other cultures; about accepting others and learning from communicating within a multi-cultural environment, and also about accepting change and openness to the outside world. The following section of the analysis will give a perspective of the kind of skills acquired while studying abroad.

5.2.5.1 Time and Work Skills

Figure 8: Time and Work Skills

When KASP students were asked about the skills achieved from studying abroad, 33.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that they developed time management and work skills, and opted for a ranking of 1 (strongly agree). Thereafter, 17.6% of the respondents chose to rank 2, 12.1% selected ranking 3, 9.0% provided ranking 4 while 11.1% of the respondents chose to rank 5. On the other hand, 3% and 3.5% of the respondents selected rankings 6 and 7, respectively, while 4% provided ranking 8, and 4% of the respondents opted for the 9th ranking. 2.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and chose to rank 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents strongly agreed with the statement related to the enhancement of their time management and work skills, while the rest varied. The reason for that will be further examined in the focus groups and interviews.

5.2.5.2 Taking Responsibility in Difficult Situations
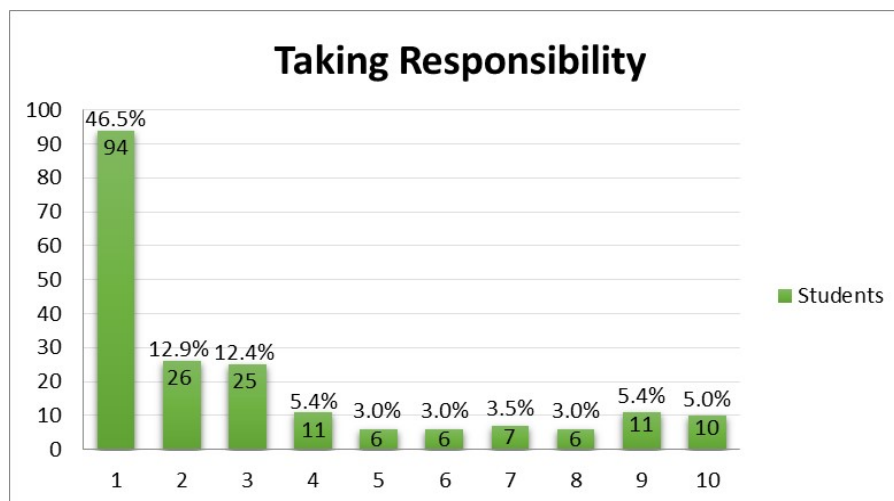
Figure 9: Taking Responsibility in Difficult Situations

When KASP students were asked about the skills achieved from studying abroad, 46.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that they developed their skills in

taking responsibility in difficult situations and opted for ranking 1 (strongly agree), 12.9% chose ranking 2, while 12.4% of the respondents provided ranking 3, 5.4% selected ranking 4, and 3% of the respondents provided ranking 5. On the other hand, 3%, 3.5% and 3% of the respondents opted for rankings 6, 7 and 8, respectively, 5.4% provided ranking 9 and, lastly, 5% strongly disagreed with the statement and selected ranking 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that their skills in taking responsibility in difficult situations were enhanced through studying abroad.

5.2.5.3 More Flexible and Adaptable when working in a Team
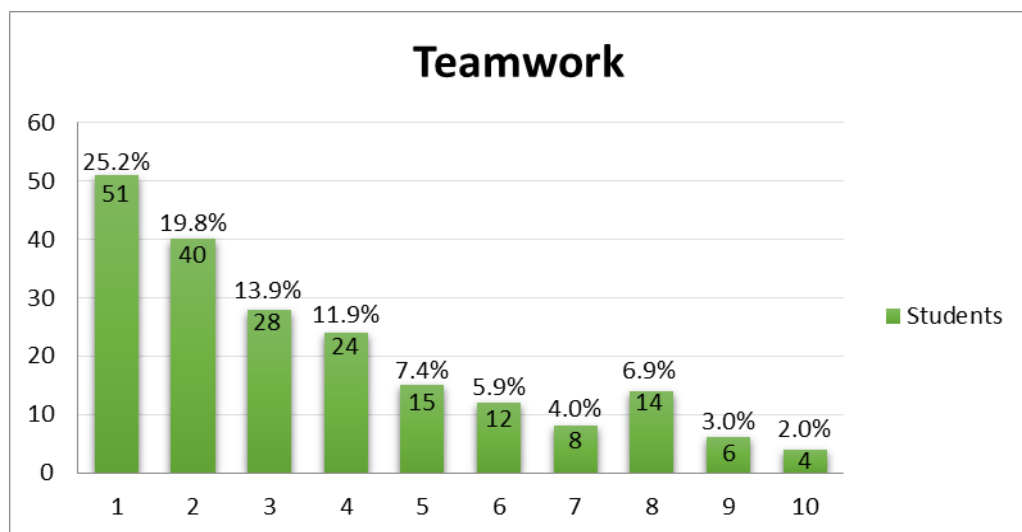
Figure 10: More Flexible and Adaptable when Working in a Team
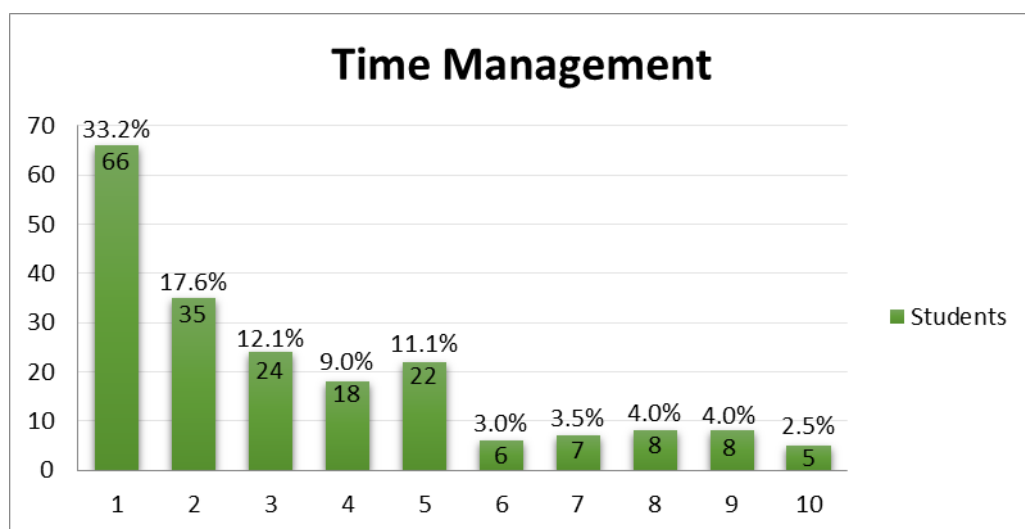
When KASP students were asked about the skills they achieved from studying abroad, 25.2% of respondents strongly agreed that they had developed their flexibility and adaptability when working in a team and selected ranking 1 (strongly agree). 19.8% chose to rank 2, 13.9% of the respondents provided ranking 3, 11.9% opted for ranking 4, while 7.4% of the interviewees provided ranking 5. On the other hand, 5.9% of the respondents opted for ranking 6, 4%

provided ranking 7, 6.9% selected ranking 8, while 3% chose to rank 9 and 2% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and provided ranking 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents agreed that their flexibility and adaptability skills when working in a team were enhanced. It shows that half did learn about teamwork, but the rest varied between agree and disagree. The reasons for this were discussed with students in the focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

5.2.5.4 Awareness of IT/Networking/Electronic Communications/Social Media
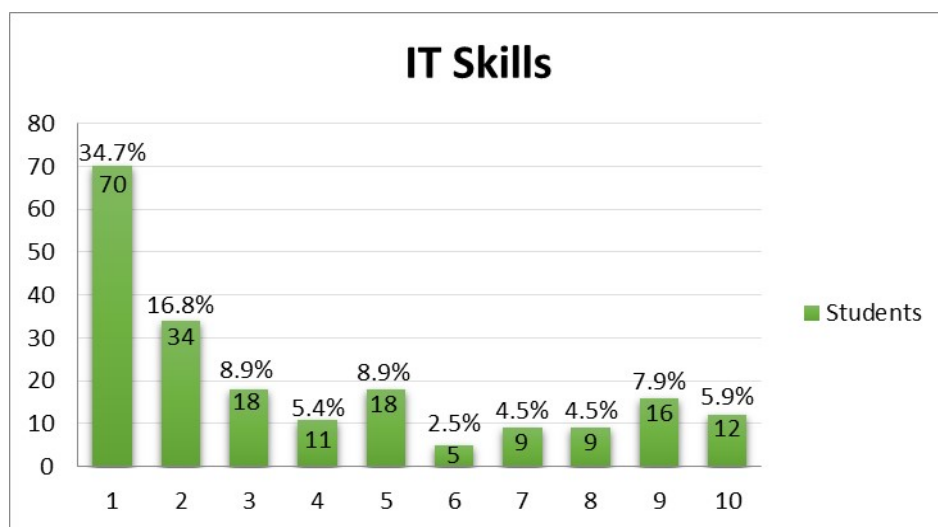
Figure 11: Awareness of IT/Networking/Electronic Communications/Social Media

When KASP students were asked about the skills achieved from studying abroad, 34.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that they had developed their awareness of IT/networking/electronic communications/social media and opted for ranking 1 (strongly agree); 16.8% of the respondents provided ranking 2, 8.9% chose to rank 3, 5.4% opted for ranking 4, while 8.9% provided ranking 5. On the other hand, 2.5% of the respondents selected ranking 6, 4.5% chose to rank 7, 4.5%

provided ranking 8, while 7.9% of the interviewees provided ranking 9 and 5.9% strongly disagreed with the statement, opting for ranking 10. Although it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they had developed their awareness of IT/networking/electronic communications/social media, it is clear that there are some who found that KASP did not help them to gain skills in technology. This might be because they have difficulties in learning or because they are already proficient in technology and so KASP did not enhance their skills in this area. A conclusion will be reached through the analysis of the other data collected.

5.2.5.5 Improved Negotiation and Presentation Skills
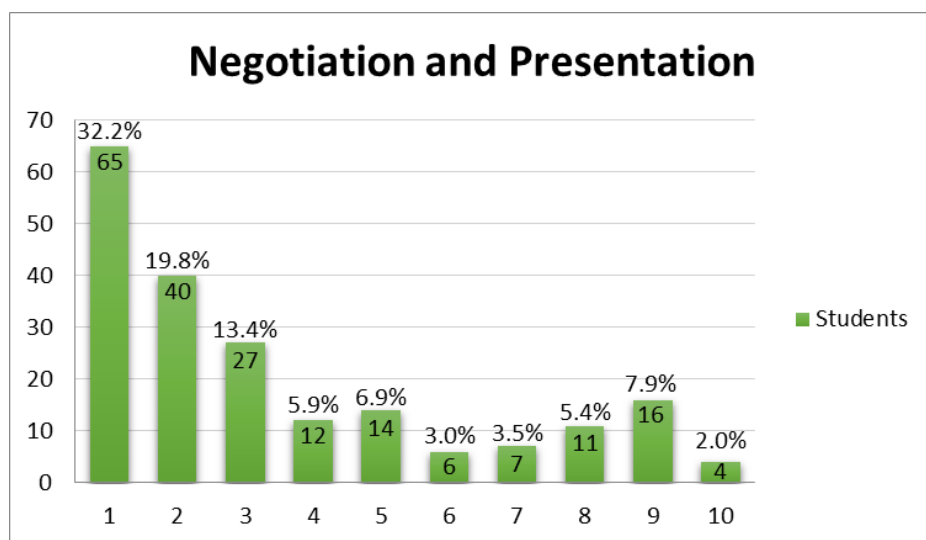
Figure 12: Improved Negotiation and Presentation Skills

When KASP students were asked about the skills they achieved from studying abroad, 32.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that they had improved their negotiation and presentation skills and provided ranking 1. 19.8% of the respondents selected ranking 2, 13.4% chose to rank 3, 5.9% opted for ranking 4, while 6.9% of the respondents provided ranking 5. On the other hand, 3% of the

respondents provided ranking 6, 3.5% chose to rank 7, 5.4% opted for ranking 8, 7.9% of the respondents provided ranking 9, with only 2% of the respondents strongly disagreeing with the statement and providing ranking 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they improved their negotiation and presentation skills. Here, it is important to find out why some students did not agree that KASP improved their negotiation and presentation skills.

5.2.5.6 Planning for Different Tasks
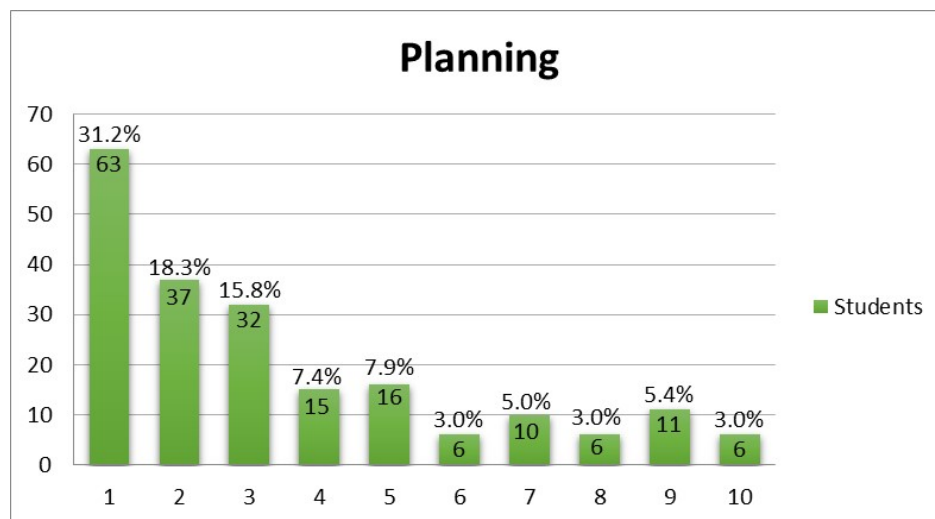
Figure 13: Planning for Different Tasks

When KASP students were asked about the skills attained from studying abroad, 31.2% of respondents strongly agreed that they had enhanced their skills in planning for different tasks and provided ranking 1 (strongly agree). 18.3% of the respondents selected ranking 2, 15.8% provided ranking 3, 7.4% chose ranking 4, and 7.9% opted for ranking 5. On the other hand, 3% of respondents provided ranking 6, 5% selected ranking 7, 3% chose ranking 8, and 5.4% provided ranking 9, while just 3% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the

statement and opted for ranking 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that their planning skills were enhanced through KASP.

5.2.5.7 Awareness of Etiquette/Dress Code in the Workplace and Formal Events
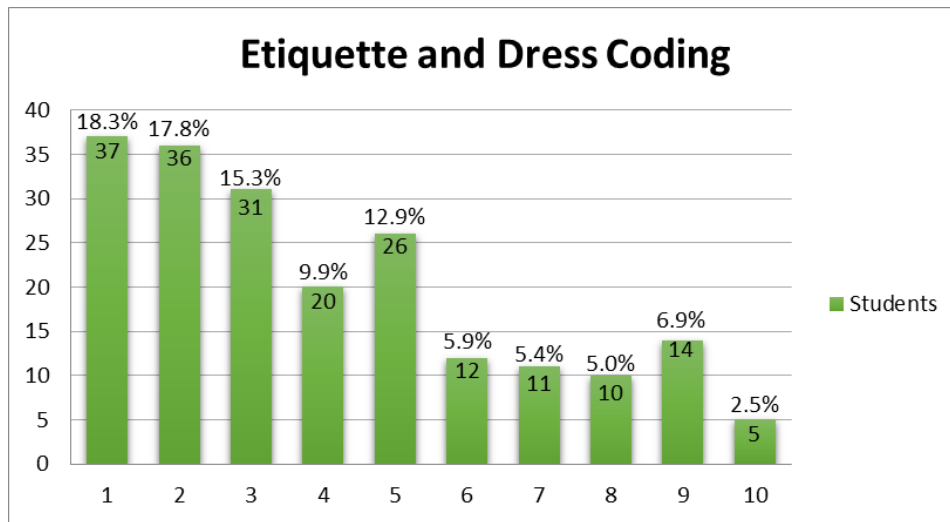
Figure 14: Awareness of Etiquette/Dress Code in the Workplace and Formal Events

When KASP students were asked about the skills they attained from studying abroad, 18.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that they had gained awareness of etiquette/dress code in the workplace and at formal events, and provided ranking 1. Next, 17.8% of respondents provided ranking 2, 15.3% chose ranking 3, 9.9% selected ranking 4, while 12.9% of respondents opted for ranking 5. On the other hand, 5.9% of respondents provided ranking 6, 5.4% chose ranking 7, 5% selected ranking 8, while 6.9% opted for ranking 9 and 2.5% strongly disagreed with the fact and provided ranking 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they had developed their awareness of etiquette/dress code in the workplace and at formal events. Living and learning in a developed country gave them the chance

to gain such skills, although some disagreed that KASP benefited them in this area. This was further discussed with the students in the focus groups and interviews.

5.2.5.8 Adapting to Change
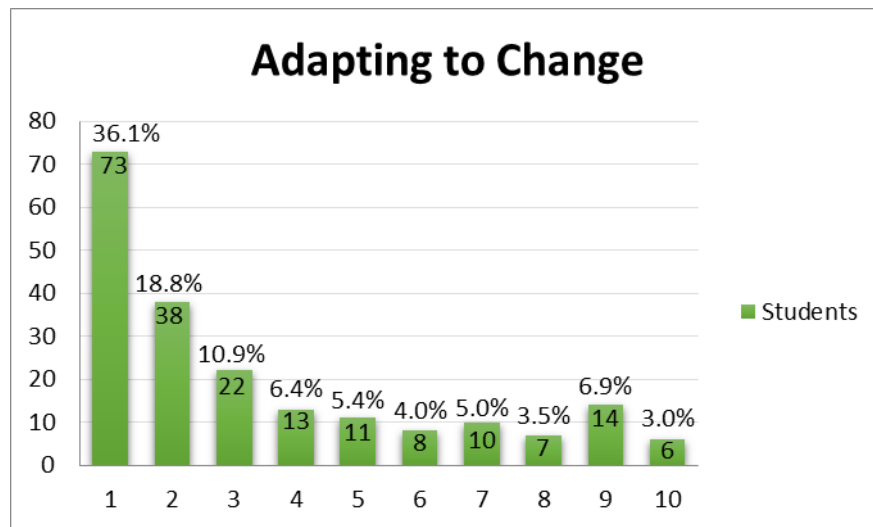
Figure 15: Adapting to Change and Being More Open-Minded

When KASP students were asked about the skills they attained from studying abroad, 36.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that they were better able to adapt to change and had become more open-minded, opting for ranking 1 (strongly agree). Next, 18.8% of the respondents provided ranking 2, 10.9% chose ranking 3, 6.4% selected ranking 4, while 5.4% of the respondents provided ranking 5. On the other hand, 4% of the respondents provided ranking 6, 5% opted for ranking 7, 3.5% provided ranking 8, while 6.9% of the respondents selected ranking 9 and the final 3% strongly disagreed with the fact and chose ranking 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they were better able to adapt to change and had become more open-minded. KASP students seem to be flexible in accepting

change and enriching their minds through openness to new ideas, but why do some feel they cannot accept change?

5.2.5.9 Create and Develop Ideas
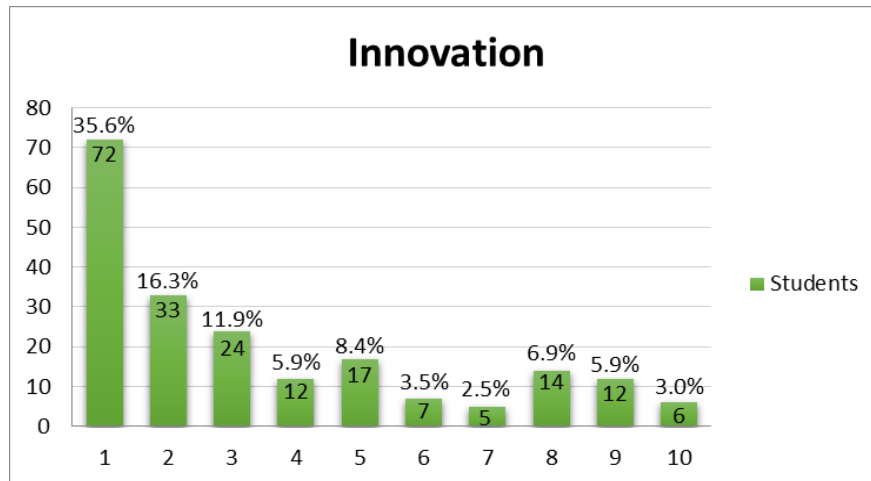
Figure 16: Create and Develop Ideas

When KASP students were asked about the skills achieved from studying abroad, 35.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that they had enhanced their creativity and had learned to develop new ideas, providing ranking 1 (strongly agree). Next, 16.3% of the respondents provided ranking 2, 11.9% chose ranking 3, a further 5.9% selected ranking 4, and 8.4% opted for ranking 5. On the other hand, 3.5% of respondents provided ranking 6, 2.5% chose ranking 7, 6.9% opted for ranking 8, while 5.9% of the respondents selected ranking 9. Finally, 3% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and provided ranking 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they had enhanced their creativity and had learned to develop new ideas.
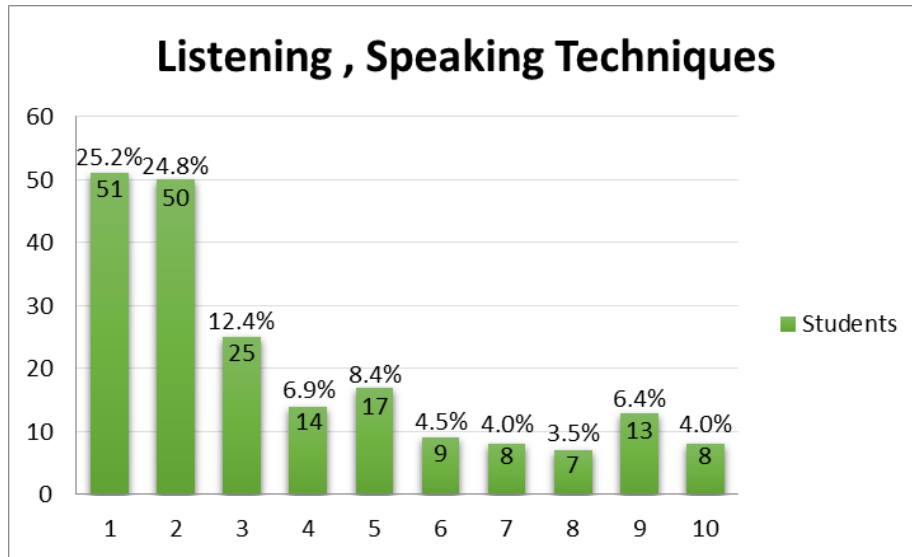
Figure 17: Listening and Speaking Techniques

When KASP students were asked about the skills they achieved from studying abroad, 25.2% of respondents strongly agreed that they had enhanced their listening and speaking techniques (such as listening carefully to the speaker, not interrupting and asking questions at appropriate times), and provided ranking 1 Furthermore, 24.8% of respondents selected ranking 2, 12.4% provided ranking 3, 6.9% chose ranking 4, and 8.4% opted for ranking 5. On the other hand, 4.5% of respondents provided ranking 6, 4% opted for ranking 7, 3.5% chose ranking 8, while 6.4% selected ranking 9. Finally, 4% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and provided ranking 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents strongly agreed with that they had enhanced their listening and speaking techniques through KASP.

5.2.6 Most Attractive Employment Sector
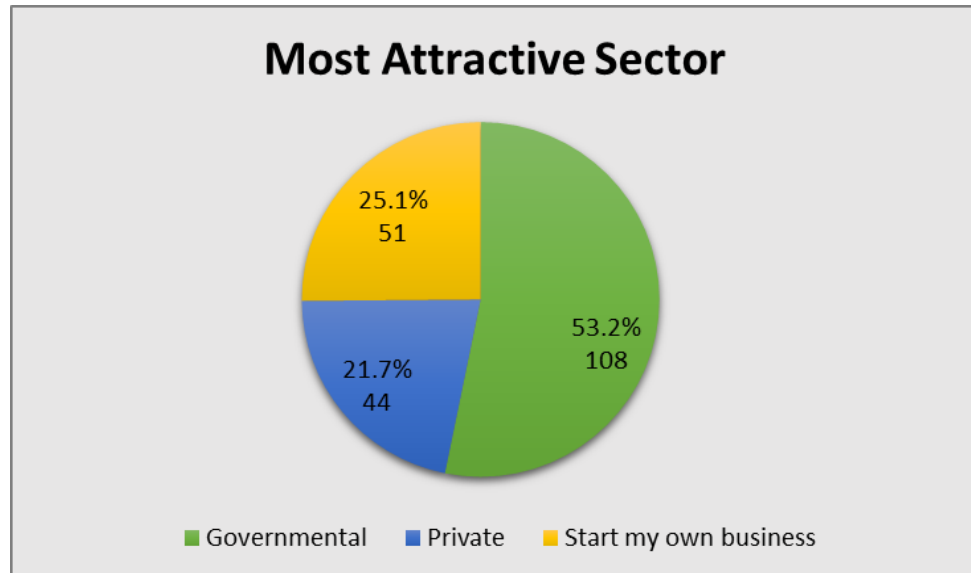
Figure 18: Most Attractive Employment Sector

When KASP students were asked about the most attractive employment sector from their perspective, the majority of respondents (53.2%) replied that the government sector was the most attractive. On the other hand, 21.7% replied that the private sector is the most attractive, while the remaining 25.1% of respondents wished to start their own business. Thus, it is concluded that the majority of KASP students considered the public sector to be the most attractive employment sector for them. In this regard, it seems that many students do not feel comfortable working in the private sector, or starting their own business, as they may be afraid of the challenge. It is important to explore the reasons behind this.

5.2.7 Obstacles Faced During the Scholarship Period
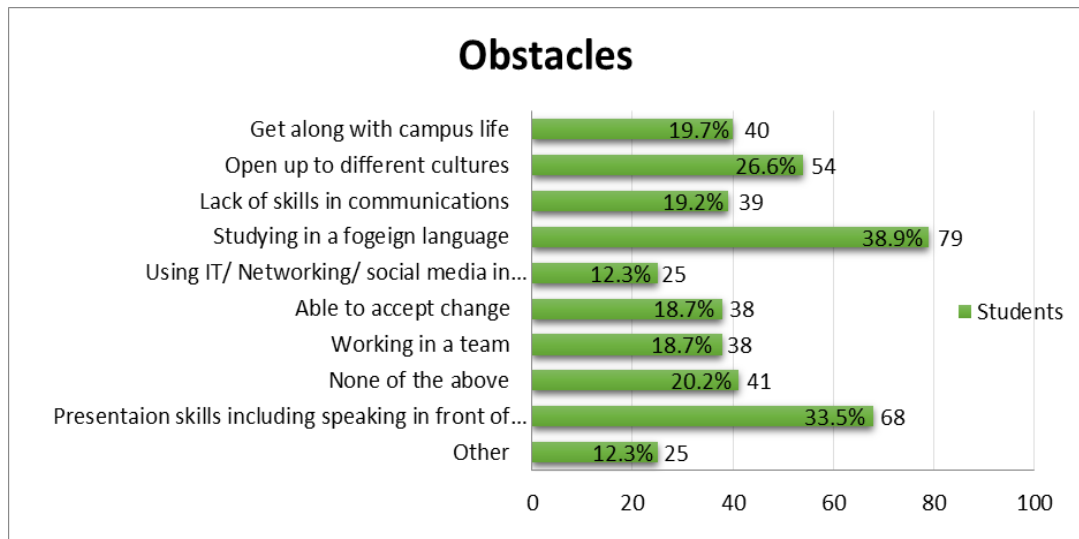
Figure 19: Obstacles Faced During the Scholarship Period

When KASP students were asked about the obstacles they faced during their scholarship period, 38.9% of the respondents considered studying in a foreign language to be the most major obstacle. The next highest value was 33.5% of the respondents who found presentation skills, (including speaking in front of an audience) to be a major obstacle. Other factors included getting along with campus life, which was considered to be an obstacle to 19.7% of respondents and opening up towards different cultures, which was a significant obstacle for 26.6% of respondents. 19.2% replied that their lack of communication skills was a problem, and 12.3% considered using IT/networking and social media in communicating with others to be an obstacle. In addition to this, 18.7% of the respondents had difficulties in accepting change and 18.7% struggled with teamwork. On the other hand, 20.2% of the respondents replied that none of the above constituted an obstacle and 12.3% considered other barriers to have played a part during their scholarship period. Learning in another language

seems to be the most significant obstacle for KASP students, and this can be linked back to their educational history in learning a second language. As argued in the third chapter of this thesis, the Saudi education system introduces the second language in the later years of education, when students are around 12 years old. The dominance of religion in KSA is a reason for not teaching a second language in the early years of education. It is vital to discuss with students why language is still an obstacle, when the programme requires students to undertake a language course prior to the start of their degree.

5.2.8 Females are Given Equal Opportunities in the Area of Study and Employment
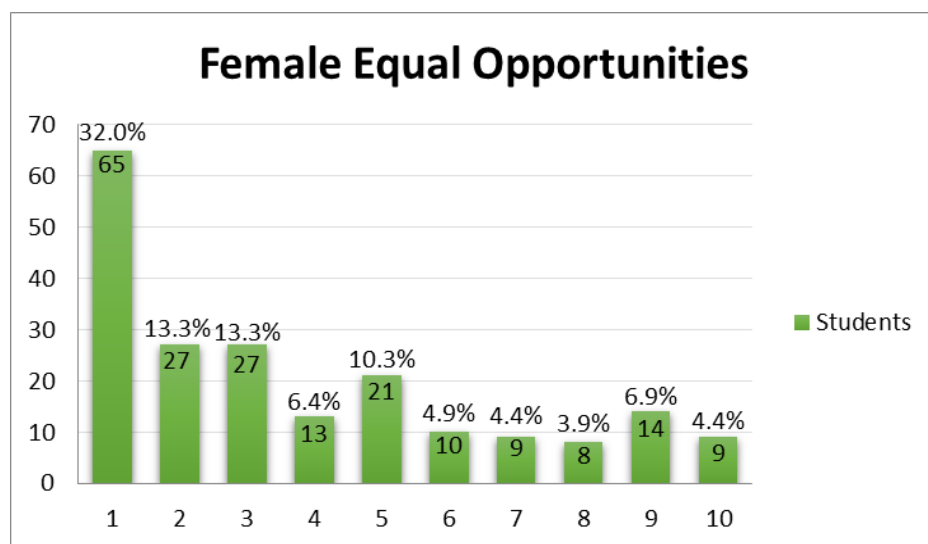
Figure 20: Females are Given Equal Opportunities in the Area of Study and Employment

When KASP students were asked about their views on equal opportunities for women in the area of study and employment, 32% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and provided ranking 1 (strongly agree). Next, 13.3%

of respondents selected ranking 2, 13.3% opted for ranking 3, 6.4% chose ranking 4, while 10.3% of respondents provided ranking 5. On the other hand, 4.9% of respondents provided ranking 6, 4.4% chose ranking 7, 3.9% opted for ranking 8, while 6.9% of the respondents selected ranking 9. Finally, 4.4% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and provided ranking 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed with that women have equal opportunities in the area of study and employment. However, there are some who do not agree that women are given equal opportunities to men. Gender equality is a very important area in this thesis, so it is important to uncover the barriers to women's empowerment.

5.2.9. Proper Training Courses and Learning Skills Were Provided as Part of KASP
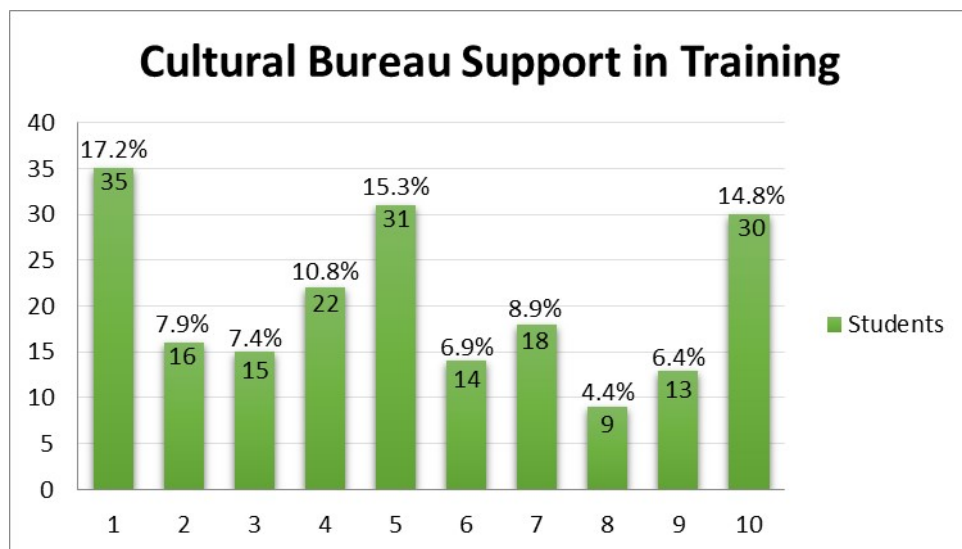
Figure 21: The Saudi Cultural Bureau, in the Context of the Scholarship Programme, Provided Proper Training Courses and Learning Skills

With respect of the effectiveness of the training course and learning skills gained from the Saudi Central Bureau in the context of the scholarship programme, 17.2% of the respondents strongly agreed and gave ranking 1, 7.9% provided ranking 2, 7.4% selected ranking 3, 10.8% opted for ranking 4, 15.3% chose ranking 5 and 6.9% of respondents provided ranking 6. Some respondents indicated their neutrality on the issue, with 8.9% of respondents opting for ranking 7 and 4.4% selecting ranking 8. The remaining respondents did not find the training courses and learning skills imparted effective knowledge. In this respect, 6.4% of respondents gave ranking 9, while the remaining 14.8% selected ranking 10. The findings reveal that the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the programme and found the training course and learning skills gained from the programme to be effective.

5.2.10 Living Abroad has offered the Chance to Learn about Other Cultures
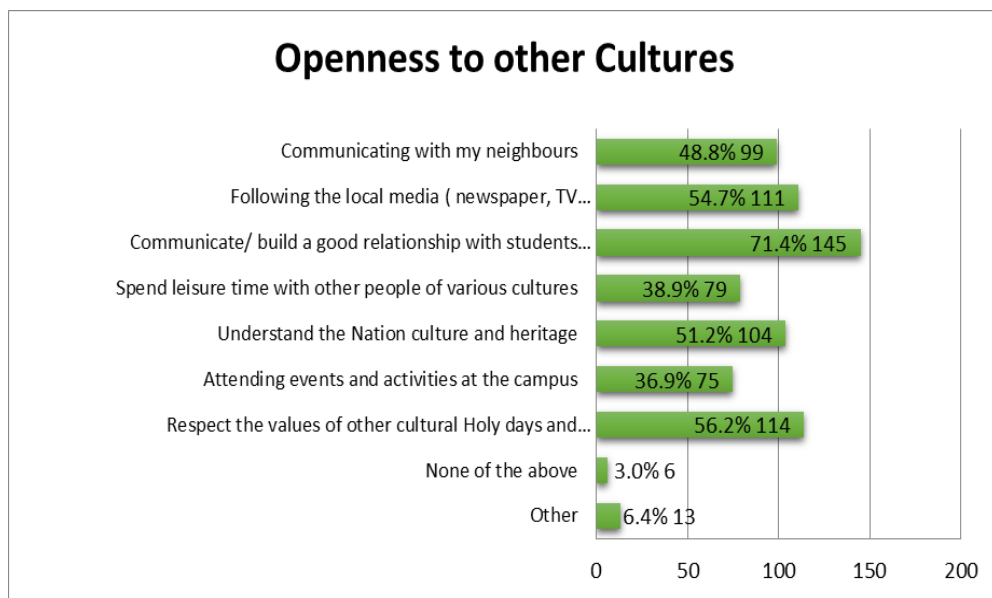
Figure 22: Living Abroad Offered the Chance to Learn about Other Cultures

With regard to the opportunity to learn about other cultures by living abroad, 48.8% of respondents stated that it was an excellent opportunity to communicate with neighbours and provided ranking 1 (strongly agree); 54.7% of respondents believed that it allowed them the chance to follow a local newspaper and selected ranking 2; 71.4% found it to be an opportunity to communicate with students from other cultures and chose to rank 3; 38.9% considered it an opportunity to spend leisure time with people from other cultures, choosing ranking 4; while 51.2% of respondents said that it offered a chance to understand the culture and heritage of other people and gave ranking 5. These findings indicate that a significant percentage of students consider living abroad to be an excellent opportunity to learn about different cultures: 36.9% of respondents saw it as an opportunity to attend events and activities on the campus and gave ranking 6; 56.2% of respondents considered it an opportunity to respect the values of other cultural holidays and celebrations and chose to rank 7; 6.4% had reasons other than the ones discussed above, which made living abroad an opportunity for them to learn from different cultures and selected ranking 8. The remaining 3% of respondents stated that none of the above factors related to living abroad provided an opportunity to learn about different cultures and gave ranking 9.

5.2.11 Do You Understand What 'Soft Skills' Means in the Work Environment?

Understanding the Meaning of "Soft Skills"

44.3%
90

53.7%
109

■ Yes
■ No
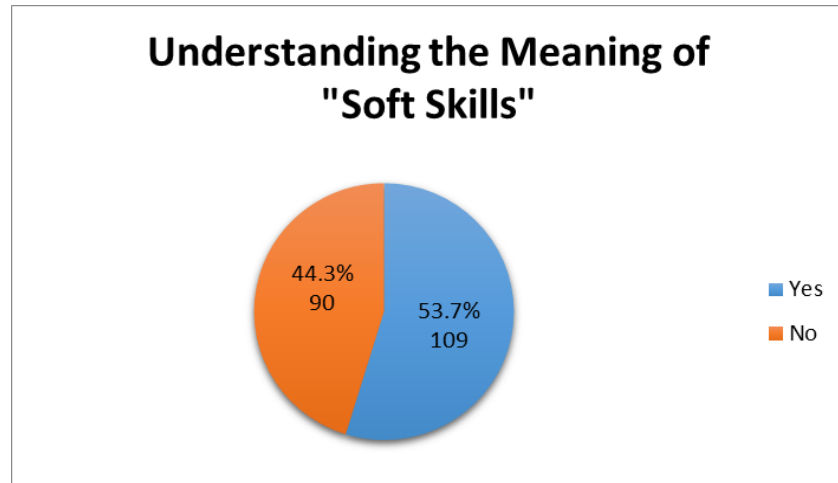
Figure 23: Do You Understand What 'Soft Skills' Means in the Work Environment?

In respect to the understanding of soft skills in the work environment, 53.7% of respondents stated that they understood the concept while the remaining 44.3% did not understand it. This indicates that a slight majority of the students were aware of the concept of soft skills in the work environment.

5.2.12 Awareness of New Skills Required for Future Career

Awareness of Skills for Future Career

31.2%
62

18.1%
36

13.1%
26

9.5%
19

8.5%
17

3.5%
7

6.0%
12

4.5%
9

3.0%
6

2.5%
5

■ Students
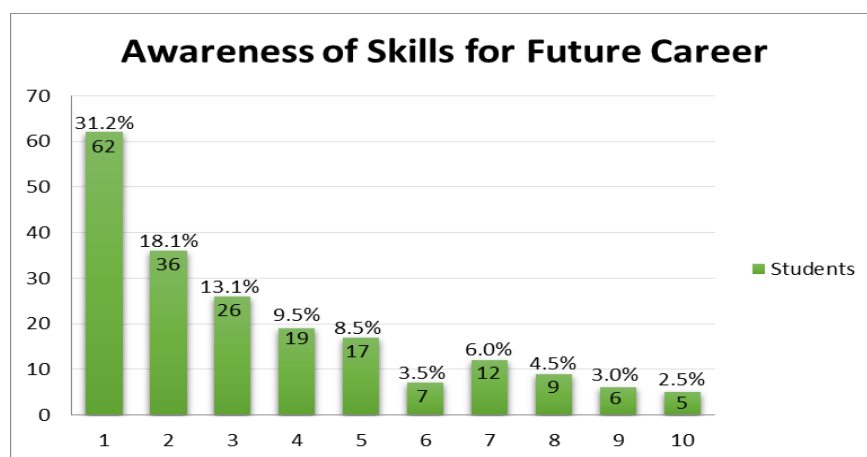
Figure 24: Awareness of New Skills Required for Future Career

In terms of the awareness of new skills required for a future career, 31.2% of respondents strongly agreed that they had the necessary awareness and gave ranking 1. Next, 18.1% provided ranking 2, 13.1% selected ranking 3, 9.5% chose ranking 4, 8.5% opted for ranking 5, while 3.5% of respondents gave ranking 6. Some respondents indicated average awareness of the new skills required for a future career, where 6% of respondents gave ranking 7 and 4.5% respondents selected ranking 8. The remaining respondents were not aware of the new skills required for a future career, with 3.0% of respondents opting for ranking 9, while the remaining 2.5% of respondents gave ranking 10. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents were aware of the new skills required for future careers.

5.2.13 The Role of the Saudi Cultural Bureau is very Effective and Supportive
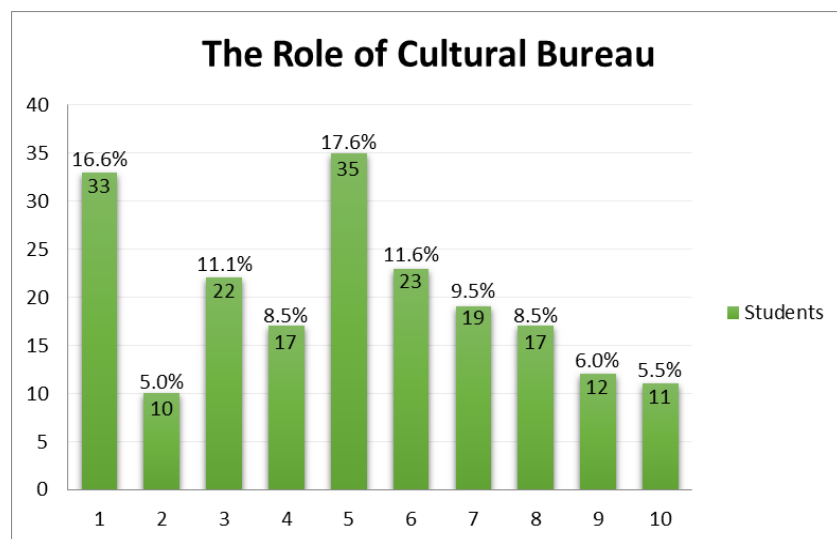
Figure 25: The Role of the Saudi Cultural Bureau is very Effective and Supportive

According to 16.6% of the total respondents who selected ranking 1 (strongly agree), the role of the Saudi Cultural Bureau was very effective. Next, 5% of respondents provided ranking 2, 11.1% gave ranking 3, 8.5% opted for ranking 4,

17.6% provided ranking 5 while 11.6% chose to rank 6. Some respondents did not agree with the effectiveness and supportiveness of the Saudi Cultural Bureau, with 9.5% of respondents giving ranking 7 and 8.5% selecting ranking 8. The remaining respondents strongly disagreed with the effectiveness and supportiveness of the Saudi Cultural Bureau, with 6% choosing ranking 9 while the remaining 5.5% respondents gave ranking 10. The findings reveal that the majority of the respondents found the role of the Saudi Cultural Bureau to be very effective and supportive.

A section was added for the participant's comments and some of the responses were about the role of the Cultural Bureau and its failure to support students, especially in the area of training and work experience. The participants claim the lack of relevant experience and skills when returning to KSA is due to the lack of support provided by the cultural office and the Ministry of Education in this regard.

The participants also blame the Cultural Bureau for not giving clear information regarding 'students' rights', and they also claim that there are some hidden circulations which the students should be aware of. For example, asking for supervisors to send the cultural office multiple letters causes students embarrassment and impacts their relationship with their supervisors. All these regulations, enforced by the cultural office, are disappointing for KASP students and create additional pressure and stress.

5.3 Analysis of Focus Groups

At the same time as the survey was distributed among students, focus groups were conducted to accumulate appropriate, reliable and valid data. The

researcher applied a qualitative approach for conducting the research in order to support the data from the quantitative approach. Further, the qualitative approach also provides greater flexibility to make changes in the interview questions as a result of the responses of the participants, so as to collect more appropriate information.

Place and Date	Focus Group	Participants
Jeddah Park Hyatt Resort, Saudi Arabia 4/7/2015	Group 1	KASP graduates of both genders, from both USA and UK universities.
Reading University, United Kingdom 30/10/2015	Group 2	KASP students of both genders currently studying in the UK.
London Chesterfield Hotel, United Kingdom 8/8/2015	Group 3	A group of female KASP students currently studying in the UK (for the purpose of gathering information on women's empowerment).
AlaanExhibition and Restaurant, Riyadh, KSA 2/1/2016	Group 4	A group of male and female KASP graduates from USA and UK universities.

Table 4: Focus Groups

Four focus groups were used to enhance the primary data. The first focus group, undertaken in KSA, was made up of both male and female KASP graduates from the UK and the USA. The second focus group comprised students from both genders pursuing a scholarship and studying in the UK. The third focus group included only female students, so as to explore the impact of the scholarship programme on women's empowerment. The fourth focus group was conducted in KSA and included both male and female KASP graduates. The purpose of this focus group was to test the findings that there is a cultural gap between these graduates and the environment in the KSA workplace. Then, the researcher

attempted to confirm the data collected in the first focus group regarding the outcome of KASP and to assess the gap between the graduates and the cultural environment in the workplace.

Some difficulties were found when arranging focus groups in the UK, in relation to having Saudi men and women together in one place. In spite of conducting the second focus group in the UK, it was not easy to have both genders in the same place, although it was on the university campus. It was also found that some female students apologised at the last minute that they would not be able to join when they knew there were Saudi male students in the group. The Saudi culture of segregation is carried with the students wherever they travel and they find it difficult to change their practices. The following analysis will elaborate on the cultural barriers faced by both genders, especially female students.

The findings of these focus groups seek to examine the soft skills and, additionally, the human capital investment made with the help of the scholarship programme. Further, it considers the cultural influence on students studying abroad, along with the programme's impact on improving gender equality within the broader context of economic development. The following section provides a detailed discussion of the findings obtained from the four focus groups.

5.3.1 Findings of Focus Group I

The first focus group was conducted in Jeddah, KSA and the participants were graduates from the UK and USA. I focused on both countries as this is where the highest numbers of KASP students were sent. The first focus group was conducted in order to evaluate the outcome of KASP in fulfilling the needs of the labour market in regards to skills and Saudization of the labour market.

Questions were asked regarding the students' experience of studying abroad and joining the labour market in KSA. When questioned about the chances of finding a job after graduating from KASP, male student (A) responded: 'In our country they prefer Ph.D. holders from the USA because they get work experience during their scholarship. In Britain, the standard of research is excellent, but the level of study and expertise in the USA is better, as we gain skills that that we cannot gain in Britain.' It seems that the graduates from USA universities found jobs more easily than the graduates from the UK because of their experience and skills. The students refer to some differences in regulations enforced by the Cultural Attaché in both countries, despite the fact that these are supposed to be the same in all of the KASP countries. Female student (B) noted that: 'In Britain, students encounter problems. For instance, their supervisor may be changed suddenly by the Cultural Attaché and this would never happen in the USA'.

The findings of the first focus group revealed that KASP graduates feel that they significantly benefitted from the services offered under the scholarship programme. Although the students did not consider academic qualifications to be crucial for seeking employment, they accepted that since the job market expects high academic standards and qualifications, they needed to learn and acquire the requisite skills. The findings revealed that the students were able to exploit some effective employment opportunities after they returned home. Some of the students preferred to set up their own enterprise, while the majority of male students preferred the government sector, to take advantage of higher salaries, pensions, allowances and a secure future. The female students also found the government sector to be more attractive for seeking employment opportunities, because of the flexibility associated with the sector.

Some graduates also believed that specialisations and qualifying certificates would be essential to acquire jobs in the private sector; it is more competitive, which further increases the preference for the public sector. It was also noted that females have less confidence and are reluctant to undertake their own business initiatives. However, the female students revealed that the scholarship programme has been very useful in helping them inculcate new skills and hone their existing skills, making them equivalent to men in terms of business acumen and excellence. In addition to this, the graduates also revealed that although the scholarship provided essential skills development and academic knowledge, they still needed experience to be competent for the job market, and this will be explored further in the interviews with individual students. For this purpose, the students had to take up different jobs to gain experience. It was also revealed from the findings that many potential employers do not yet trust the students who return home after pursuing such scholarship programmes, so they have to prove their potential and skills through work experience, despite their government funding having expired. Some students took this risk for their own benefits.

The findings revealed that the programme allowed the students in health and medical studies to choose between studies only or a combination of study and residency. The latter proved to be highly beneficial for students to gain work experience and develop effective managerial skills. The students also revealed that the US provided better work experience and skills development in comparison to Britain. This was considered to be due to greater work and skill development opportunities in the USA, and the fact that the participants in Britain had some problems with the Cultural Bureau, such as frequent changes in

supervisors, which could interrupt the flow of learning for a student, in addition to the fact that there was poor communication between the Cultural Bureau and students. The findings revealed that the scholarship provided effective training in communication and particularly the uses of technology to communicate. It was also very helpful in inculcating crucial listening and speaking skills, along with the ethics and etiquettes to be followed while communicating. The scholarship also provided some limited opportunities for training in alignment with terms outlined by the culture attaché. However, there were some specific conditions associated with such training, such as advanced application procedures and regulations for obtaining approval, which made it quite challenging and burdensome for the students.

The graduates were dissatisfied with the role of the Cultural Attaché because they encountered problems while seeking permission and acceptance for the training. In addition, the attaché did not provide clear information about the support required by the students throughout the scholarship programme. The attaché also failed to provide any form of assistance, even in the case of the Optional Practice Training (OPT) programme that provided optional training and internships. The attaché also failed to provide any assistance in managing the visa after the end of the programme, to help students obtain work experience. Male student (A) observed: 'There are some difficulties; the attaché does not accept or support all the students' needs'. Male student (C) added: 'they do not provide advice to scholars or respond to his/her needs. The whole situation for scholars remains mysterious. The attaché does not offer clear information about the support they offer, from the minute the student arrives until the end of the programme of study.'

When I asked the female students the same question about Cultural Attaché support, female student (S) replied:

> *'We have previously discussed with the Attaché the issue of centralization of power; jobs and decisions should not be in the hands of one organisation, there must be the distribution of roles and power. I would also like to say that there is a contradiction in services' provision. Once, I had a letter from the Ministry of Education about a particular issue and I received another letter from the same department on the same subject with an entirely different response.'*

Female student (O) added:

> *'For me, in Britain, I had to follow continuously up with the Attaché in order to get my issues sorted out; it was tough. I also had to explain the same story, from A to Z, every time I went there; the Attaché was not supportive at all.'*

Then, female student (B) said:

> *'They told us we would not stay to finish the training. We faced lots of problems. We were supposed to have their acceptance for the work programme [...] we faced too many obstacles in order to get their acceptance.'*

Finally, female student (S) concluded:

> *'As my friend mentioned to you, the attaché offers only one training.'*

The findings show that KASP does not help students to gain skills through work experience and training courses, whether due to difficult communications with the Cultural Attaché or because the programme did not support it.

The findings of the focus group provide elaborate details about the inclusion of females and the programme's impact on them. Interviewees considered the procedure for females enrolling on the scholarship programme to be quite straightforward. However, they encountered some difficulties, due to a lack of assistance and guidance regarding the programme.

Neither the male nor female students encountered major discriminatory issues while seeking job opportunities. However, some females faced Mahram issues while pursuing higher education and upgrading their academic qualifications. Nevertheless, not all female students encountered the Mahram issue, but when the Cultural Attaché knew of the absence of Mahram, it became an obstacle. Female student (C) observed: 'For me it was the Mahram issue, especially when we needed to extend our course or get more support with studies. Upgrading our courses was a real problem for women.' For one female student (D), on the other hand said: 'In my case, Mahram was not an obstacle; they were not aware of my situation at the beginning, and it was not a problem when they found out later, but the upgrade was a real issue for women and not for men.'

Further, some students encountered problems when seeking jobs after returning to KSA; it was claimed that they were overqualified for the positions they applied for and had to accept being promoted later. Further, females were not appointed to engineering roles. However, both genders encountered difficulties in applying for jobs in the field of engineering because they did not have sufficient experience; this directly contradicts with KASP's goals and vision. When they were asked about Saudization, one female student (F) said: 'In the field of engineering, they have more confidence in foreigners than Saudi nationals. For example, in Aramco, the foreigner gets better appointments.'

The interview with this focus group also provided key information about the interaction between the scholarship students and the local people of the UK and the USA. The findings revealed that, initially, students encountered problems in interacting with their neighbours and reading the local news because of language

difficulties. However, gradually, they developed good relationships with their neighbours. Although initially, some were not comfortable dealing with people from different cultures and did not expect to be on good terms with them, they experienced positive relationships with people from other cultures and communities and had learned to accept others, e.g. the Jewish community. In Canada and the USA, on the university campus, students first developed healthy relationships only with other students from KSA. With time, these students became familiar with students from other cultures and countries. However, some students from KSA kept themselves secluded from other students because they felt they would be safer if they stayed in their community group. This will be further elaborated on in other focus groups and in the semi-structured interviews.

5.3.2 Findings of Focus Group II

The second focus group was conducted in Reading, in the UK, with a mixed group of male and female students. The second focus group interview was conducted to explore the cultural knowledge, skills and training gained by KASP students, as well as gender equality. The students expressed their frustration with their poor treatment at the hands of the Cultural Attaché's office. One female student (S) said: 'I find the attaché has an appalling attitude towards students; the way they meet and treat people may raise the visitor's blood pressure!' The students revealed that they had intended to train under the programme, but the attaché did not provide any training or any advice in this regard. Nevertheless, if students undertake such training, the attaché does support them, but they are limited to one training course during the whole period of the scholarship. When asked about taking training sessions during the scholarship programme, a male student

(A) replied: 'No, but I knew that the attaché permits one training course for each student. The training has conditions and certain procedures that applicant must follow.'

The Cultural Attaché sometimes provides assistance for travelling and transportation from one venue to another, as some students pointed out. A vast majority of students undertake training, but they do encounter problems because of the conditions and procedures imposed upon them by the attaché, so they end up paying the expenses. The students pursue training in language, leadership, computing and other areas. In addition, some educational training is also undertaken, with courses such as statistics, research methods and academic writing, to help students in developing academic and research skills.

The findings of the group interview revealed that the scholarship programme gave students numerous opportunities to develop organisational and managerial skills, either from the courses taken in their programme of study or through their communication with other students and the community abroad. The programme reportedly enabled students to obtain enterprising skills and gain experience through volunteering with the Saudi students club[7]. Flexibility, negotiation, dealing with people, advancement in technology, academic analysis, leadership, financial management and budgeting were the main areas in which the students learned skills. The training undertaken was believed by interviewees to be very effective and helped them in managing their financial resources and prioritising their expenditures, as well as gaining effective communication skills and cultural awareness. Additionally, training also helped the students to become focused and

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[7] http://sacmclubs.org/en/site/page/view/aboutsacmclubs 9format

goal-oriented, as well as committed towards their work and career, in the same way that people in Western countries are. The strict law also enabled students to become committed to learning and become focused professionals and personnel, which are usually weak areas in KSA, according to what the students found.

Students also gained exposure to and greater understanding of social media and information technology for advanced communication. Initially, they could only understand the traditional means of communication, such as the telephone, but with help in this area, they learned to utilise multimedia and other social media tools in an effective manner. Students also noted that they learned skills in speaking, listening, negotiating and presenting. With the help of training undertaken through the scholarship programme, students learned presentation skills, as well as gaining crucial knowledge in exhibiting effective communication skills. The presentation sessions also allowed students to discuss key academic and general issues, apply logic, speak fluently and become good listeners. These skills also helped students in improving their command over the English language.

In terms of culture, the findings of the interview revealed that initially students may encounter difficulties, due to different languages and different cultures. In addition, some temporary difficulties, such as finding suitable accommodation, late salaries and management of family and children became the greatest challenges for students. Sometimes those who were married also faced problems in familiarising the culture to their children, because they had less knowledge about it. Further, student groups included students from various cultures and countries, such as Spain and Korea, whose different cultures and languages also

created barriers in terms of interaction. The students revealed that they had good and healthy relations with people of different nationalities. However, there were incidents where students experienced negative racial attitudes against Arabian, African and Spanish people. It was also observed that sometimes it was sad for students to read criticisms of Islam in the local news.

The findings further revealed a significant gap between men and women. The major problems were experienced while undertaking specialisations in engineering. One female student (A) discussed the issue of inequality:

> *'There were also some issues experienced by female students during the scholarship programme. KASP did not allow certain specialisations to be open to women because it is believed that women would not be able to work in those areas in the future when they return to KSA. This was considered a major discrimination against female students […] I know some girls who have been here without Mahram for 10 years and they have never been confronted with such a situation; why would the attaché hold some female scholars accountable for the absence of Mahram and not do the same with other females? Why do they keep threatening to have me returned to KSA? If this is a law, then there is no justice in its enforcement. I am a woman and a mother to three children and I bear their full, huge responsibilities alone; I see the Attaché's attitude as unacceptable because it adds to my burdens and it casts suspicions on my ethics.'*

The students also revealed that prejudice against women was also encountered.

A female student (A) says:

> *'I believe the system of scholarship is sexist. I am here because the university forced me to complete my studies. My husband cannot be with us all the time because of his job back home; this was a problem for me. The absence of a Mahram could cause me problems with the attaché as they can easily order me to return. A few days ago the attaché contacted me and asked me why I was still in Britain while my husband is not with me; I told them to call*

> *the King Saud University and ask them why their lecturer is in Britain without her husband.'*

Saudi culture is carried with the students even in a developed country. One male student (R) observed: 'We decided to have two separate halls in the Saudi Club in Reading: one for women and the other, which is some distance from it, for men. It was better to separate them.' The newly appointed women encountered considerable doubts about mixing with male colleagues. However, the meetings, workshops, mixed sessions and conferences provided a significant opportunity for students of both genders to interact with each other.

When attempting to arrange the interviews, I observed that some female students did not want to meet in a place with Saudi male students. Male students were very sensitive when it came to making arrangements with Saudi women; they preferred not to contact Saudi females due to the cultural boundaries. The Saudis, in some cases, did not want to communicate with each other. A male student (F) concluded: 'As Saudis, we don't communicate properly with each other. If we meet, we don't greet each other. Once I saw a Saudi man and tried to greet him, but he made me regret that; he treated me as if I was a beggar.'

5.3.3 Findings of Focus Group III

I chose to conduct a third focus group with female KASP students studying in the UK, in order to explore their experience with regards to women's empowerment and equality. The findings of the third focus group aimed to explain the gender issues related to equality and women's empowerment. Students noted that the KASP regulations show some inequality and barriers for women. Female student (M) stated:

> *I imagine that KASP does not agree to send women to certain specialisations because they cannot work in those areas of specialisation in the future so sending them is pointless. I believe this is the only area of discrimination against women in the scholarship programme.*

On the other hand, the women revealed that the scholarship programme was very efficient for them in gaining useful professional, as well as academic, skills. In this regard, the training sessions undertaken during their programme of study helped them in learning soft skills and personal skills, as well as other competencies such as commitment, time management, communication and the use of technology. In addition, the female students reported that they learned to adapt to new cultures and adjust to new people by developing listening and speaking skills. The Saudi student clubs were very useful in this regard, as they helped in raising awareness. The female students noted that these skills would be very helpful for them when they take up employment in public and private sector organisations. The cultures of the US and the UK have also been useful in developing crucial professional skills, such as focus, responsibility, commitment and goal orientation.

Interaction opportunities with students from different cultures also provided them with significant chances to increase awareness, gain knowledge and develop an understanding of different people and cultures. These students also carry the responsibility of portraying a positive image of their culture. The women stated that the scholarship programme not only provided them with educational certificates but also helped them in becoming more confident and strong, to stand up to society and excel in their profession. In the context of preferable sectors to work, the female students believed the private sector to be

more disciplined and clean, and to provide more opportunities for career development and skills enhancement. This is because students believed recruitment practice in the public sector to be primarily based on inheritance of positions, rather than merit. Culture and traditions are the most dominant factors in Saudi social life. Students learnt from KASP not to be materialistic; the size of your office, for example, does not equate with position and prestige. Female student (S) said:

> *'One of the things that attracted my attention is the size of office that a professor or a manager occupies; they have a very small office and he or she does the work alone. In my country the ego is huge and managers must have a huge luxury office. They care a lot for appearances while here personality and the way people think matter more.'*

The students believed that they acquired some cultural values that added to their own native cultural values; they learned tolerance and respect for other religions and cultures. They considered themselves to be ambassadors and stewards of Islamic culture while in foreign countries. The female students illustrated contradictory opinions with regard to clothing and their attire at work. Some were strict and believed that, as they represented their culture in a foreign country, they must follow the norms of clothing and dress as postulated by Islam, and not adopt complete Western attire. On the other hand, some females revealed that they stopped wearing their hijab while at work, due to the exposure to Western culture. However, these students believed that when they returned to KSA, they would again wear their hijab to conform to the cultural norms and social standards imposed by Saudi society. In this regard, some female students also stated that they would follow the standards of dressing and chose attire to meet cultural and family norms. However, most found the Mahram unacceptable,

as did other female students interviewed by me. They also felt safe and protected by law in the UK, much more than in KSA, because they felt that the men in their own country could harass them more easily due to the lack of effective laws to protect women. They believed they would encounter some challenges when returning home, in respect of the freedom that they could enjoy in Western countries. In these countries, they were completely independent to choose their work, as well as the means of transportation, whereas in KSA they are restricted from leaving their home without a male driver. One male student (A) from the second focus group has argued about protecting women from harassment:

> *'In KSA, there is no direct law to protect women if they are exposed to harassment, but women here [UK] go out and mix with men and know there is a law to protect them if they are exposed to harassment, a law that applies to all people.'*

Mahram is one of the major obstacles to the freedom of women in KSA, as well as a type of financial burden. In this context, the Cultural Attaché also has the power to stop the scholarships of successful women, which creates a lot of pressure on female students and makes it difficult for them to study freely. Female students, however, believe there is little discrimination against male and female students in respect of the scholarship programme and noted that a number of women have been successful and have greater chances of pursuing a Ph.D. than many men, which makes them proud of themselves. However, sometimes they also encounter cultural issues because of discrimination with regard to their rights.

5.3.4. Findings of Focus Group IV

A decision was made to conduct a fourth focus group in Saudi Arabia for those students from both the UK and the USA, who had completed their studies under

KASP and returned home. The focus group included eight students from diverse academic backgrounds. The purpose of this focus group was to examine the skills acquired by them during the scholarship programme and their residence abroad and to test the gap between them and the work environment in KSA. The focus group meeting took place in Riyadh, the capital of KSA, where society is more conservative than the Western province, where the first focus group meeting took place. I did not have any obstacles in meeting both genders in a mixed environment in Jeddah in the Western province, where it is a more open society than other parts of the Kingdom, this is part of the contradiction when the students discussed women issues.

The findings of the focus group revealed that the scholarship programme proved to be highly useful for the students in managing issues like time, organisation and workload, and helped in making them more responsible for their future career. In this respect, students revealed that the scholarship enabled them to adapt themselves to the environment of the new culture, learning from other students of diverse cultures and experiences, and communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds. The scholarship programme requires Mahram for female students, which makes them more accountable as they must manage the responsibilities of a dependent along with their academic responsibilities. The scholarship programme also enabled students to learn more professional communication, negotiation and management skills, further enhancing their sense of responsibility. The students feel that they can be more organised and can manage their time more effectively after undertaking the scholarship. In this regard, a female student (Y) stated:

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> *'It helped me a lot, as I learned to adapt myself to the environment that I live in. For example, I used to think that studying needed a certain setting until I saw travellers on the underground reading books and making their travel time useful, so I learned to make use of any available time. I believe it is good that one looks into other people's experiences and learns from them; dealing with different people from different cultural and environmental backgrounds has benefited me a lot. When I left for the scholarship, my younger brother was my Mahram. I was totally responsible for him so I had to learn to organise my time; I had to drive for an hour to be able to reach the lecture on time. The scholarship has improved my time management a lot and made me very much stronger than before.'*

Similarly, a female student (E) found:

> *'My time organisation improved a lot with the scholarship. There were little things that I never thought of when I was in KSA, like transport, how to manage my days and, also, how to deal with people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. All this was not possible for me in the past, but the scholarship made it possible.'*

The students also acquired key listening and speaking skills, which gave them effective opportunities to express themselves with confidence. Further, the students also acquired the art of questioning during discussions and offering positive comments. In this regard, a female student (E) stated: 'In the West they give you more chances to express yourself and to finish talking before they answer you. We then teach our students the same, after we return.' Similarly, female student (N) observed: 'We learned when to interrupt and comment in a nice manner. If someone is speaking, you should always ask his or her permission to add something; this was one of the techniques they taught us'.

The students also revealed that, after pursuing the scholarship programme, they feel more responsible for their personal, academic and professional lives. Further, they believe that they have become more disciplined in their lives and

are able to manage their family, as well as their professional responsibilities in a more efficient manner. In this regard, one female student (Y) stated: 'For me the responsibilities have changed and increased and I became more aware of organising my time. I am independent and responsible for myself; I don't need others to remind me of duties, or when to go out and when to return home'. The male student (I) observed, 'I believe I am more responsible after the scholarship', and male student (S) agreed: 'Definitely, it increased my sense of responsibility. My work is already much more disciplined and I cannot endure any chaos.'

In respect of teamwork, the students also revealed during the interview that their team management skills and abilities improved to a significant extent. The majority of the respondents believe that they have acquired team management skills with the help of the scholarship programme. Although initially the students encountered various challenges in meeting deadlines and targets, with practice they adapted themselves to time constraints and are able to manage effectively. The scholarship programme enables the students to explore their weak and strong areas, which was further helpful in assigning roles and allocating responsibilities while undertaking group tasks. Furthermore, exposure to people from diverse cultural and national backgrounds also enabled the students to develop more knowledge about communicating and collaborating with individuals who have different cultural values and experiences than themselves. The students had not previously had any significant experience of team management, and it was the scholarship programme which exposed them to teamwork and helped them in generating key leadership and administration skills. In this regard, one female student (N) observed:

> *'For me, I knew about teamwork when I was in Riyadh since I was a university student, but my knowledge increased and strengthened abroad. There is a difference as in Riyadh we deal with people from the same culture and environment, but abroad we deal with people from different cultural and environmental backgrounds. I have gained lots of experiences through teamwork.'*

In a similar vein, female student (E) stated:

> *'We had an idea about teamwork here in KSA, but abroad we learned to be professionals, we learned that personal judgements and desires do not rule the job; members of the team should abandon their personal feelings and only be there for achieving the task in hand. In KSA, people are emotional, and not neutral; our personal ideas and feelings control us.'*

Female student (A) concurred:

> *'I did not have teamwork experience before the scholarship, but during the scholarship, I conducted a group project. I learned from the experience to accept others, whatever the differences are between us. I also learned the meaning of leadership; it was a very useful experience.'*

The interview with the students also revealed that they have significant exposure to information technology and communication. In this regard, the students revealed that they learned how to use Internet browsers to search and explore information, and how to use IT tools, such as e-mail, video-conferencing and Skype, to communicate with people. The use of such technologies and applications enabled the students to enhance their communication skills to a large extent, although some did not find this skill was used when they returned to work in KSA. A female student (E) stated:

> *'Definitely, the situation abroad is different from here; they don't depend on telephone calls abroad and, for this reason, I learned to use email. I also use the Internet in searching for information. I work for a specialised hospital so I learned how to use Skype to attend and participate in meetings.'*

Female student (Y) similarly observed:

> *'My communication skills have changed hugely. In Riyadh, communication is mainly via telephone, contrary to the situation abroad where email is used. It is fast and if you send a message, you receive the response within a maximum of two hours, even if it is a private email. Here, they rarely use email and I miss this so much.'*

In this context, the students also revealed that they acquired improved presentation, negotiation and discussion skills. The scholarship programme enabled them to become more confident in speaking and presenting. In addition, the students also gained exposure and acquired effective professional etiquette with the help of the scholarship programme. The students learned the importance of presentation and dress code appropriate to the occasion, and inculcated fundamental social etiquettes. It was also concluded from the focus group interview that the scholarship programme enabled students to learn how to manage change and inculcated tolerance and acceptance. The students learned to adapt in line with the Western lifestyle, culture and education system. Change management is a crucial skill, which enables the students to cope with homesickness, and increases their ability to learn a wider range of skills. The students did not reveal any significant experiences of culture shock and gradually adapted and accepted the Western cultures with ease. The diversity of cultures encountered helped the students in learning about different languages and experiences. The students revealed highly positive perceptions about Western cultures. In this respect, one female student (Y) stated:

> *'I knew I was ready for a change. I believe change gives people the opportunity to understand themselves more fully and to develop accordingly. This, of course, is critical. When I first came I was full of enthusiasm to face anything; I had no difficulties while dealing*

with Americans because they treat you as a person regardless of whether they like your country or not.'

Another key skill examined among KASP students was creativity. The students revealed that they were able to explore more innovative ideas and apply an innovative approach to performing tasks. Western culture allowed them the freedom of thought and expression, which triggered their creative zeal and helped them to think outside the box; this would not be possible in KSA, which is more controlled. They feel that the scholarship programme gave them an opportunity to become more creative, gain more awareness and generate more innovative ideas. In this respect, a female student (A) stated: 'Yes, previously I did not have ideas, but now I have new ideas and I soon adapt them to my work'.

Female student (A) also found that:

> *'In the West, they allow you the opportunity to produce and to be creative. I studied language in my country, and I studied information technology there. This academic switch between the two different fields was not possible in my homeland. They gave me the opportunity to learn and never blamed me for not knowing.'*

Female student (D) agreed:

> *'I changed entirely. I studied fine art for 4 years at King Saud University and during that time we were not allowed any imagination. The twenty of us in the class were guided and controlled; we had to follow exactly what they told us to do. When I arrived in the West, the first thing they did was to put me in a white room with lots of white paper. I asked them what they wanted me to do and they told me that I was the one who should say what I wanted and what I can do as an artist. I learned to visit YouTube in order to learn and be creative.'*

The students also started following the news in daily newspapers and on television, which helped them in becoming more aware of the events going on around the globe and enhanced their general awareness. In this regard, one male

student (S) stated: 'Yes, at the time of my scholarship, life in Britain was very eventful: there were strikes and attacks, and also the Olympics. I used to follow them all, especially the analysis. I was attracted to all the events of that time'.

The students revealed the gap between what they learned from KASP and the situation they faced when returning home, regarding applying skills and practicing what they had learned. When they were asked about this gap, a male student (A) stated:

> 'The difference between us is huge in terms of self-discipline. For instance, car drivers show their respect on the road and traffic laws without having written plates displayed on the path to remind them what to do. But here, many people don't comply with the traffic or driving rules. I really hope to see people become aware of discipline without having systems to force them to do so [...] dealing with others abroad made me understand many of the things in this world.'

Male student (I) found it difficult to accept the society of KSA on his return:

> 'There are things I would love to change here, such as respect for others regardless of colour, religion and culture. I learned that abroad because I lived in a foreign country and went through the experience of being a stranger.'

In this regard, one female student (E) applied what she learned abroad to her students in educational fields:

> 'I'll give you an example of things that I learned abroad and tried to apply for my students here. I tried to make them confident and trust their own abilities, confident when they speak, pose questions, discuss issues, and to be persistent in chasing their rights. Also, with regard to time management, people used to come to the clinic without an appointment and during my break; I suggested a schedule to my colleagues to organise break-time between us.'

Female student (M) found it difficult to deal with society when she joined the workforce in KSA after graduating from KASP: 'I was faced with an absence of discipline and commitment'.

The study revealed that the students have changed and become open-minded and accepting towards others, but they were culturally shocked when they returned home to find that society is still the same as they left it and they find it difficult to fit in. Male student (A) learned how to respect others and accept their cultures and religions and he wished that was also the case in KSA society:

> *'I was not faced with many difficulties, but I hated the unsystematic, random behaviour. I learned abroad to respect other religions; I see them as personal and people should be allowed to differ. This what I wish to see here.'*

Female student (N) encountered similar disappointments: 'During my return in the holidays, I had problems with time organisation. I was unable to manage my time as I had planned because the driver was late or other people were late, etc.' Female student (M) stated:

> *'One of the things that I learned and would like to apply here is living simply […] If I just give up myself to society I will continue accepting invitations and attend social gatherings […] The company that I work with has a developed system, and all its rules are similar to those we learned abroad. I felt the company was very advanced and progressive.'*

Students learned that law and being aware of the rules is what keeps people disciplined abroad. Female student (D) was disappointed when her brother followed the rules while he was in the USA but did not when he went back home: 'Some people respect the rules abroad and forget this when they return home'. Female student (Y) described a similar experience:

> *Once I was talking to my brother who was not putting his seatbelt on while driving. I asked him the reason for him being committed to the law abroad but not in our country and he told me he had to respect the law there because he feared the police.*

Female student (D) stated:

> *'I feel sorry when I see that we don't appreciate and value discipline and I wonder why we can't be committed to it'.*

In response to the question of the cultural gap, a female student (M) responded:

> *'I really like the way they take care of their old public properties abroad, and how they keep them maintained. It is not the same here because we get rid of the old and replace it with a new one without trying to maintain it first, maybe because we have the resources for that. This is what I wish my country to follow as an example.'*

The study reveals that students find it difficult to cope with Saudi society after they have lived and learned in modern societies. Further interviews were conducted with some individual students to confirm the findings of the data collected in the focus groups.

5.4 Analysis from Semi-Structured Interviews

A number of semi-structured interviews were conducted randomly with individual Saudi students of KASP (from both genders) studying in the UK, to see how effective the programme is regarding imparting new skills, helping students to adapt to change, and in promoting women's empowerment.

Place and Date	Interviewee	Participants
United Kingdom, Norwich, UEA 6/10/2015	Male students: 1- T1 2- A	Male students of KASP, who are still studying in the UK.
United Kingdom, London, Down to Earth Café 29/8/2015 7/11/2015	Female students: 1- F 2- R	Female students of KASP, who are still studying in the UK (for the purpose of discussing women's empowerment).
KSA 18/12/2015	1- Y 2- N1	Female graduates from the KASP who have joined the labour market in KSA
KSA 18/12/2015	2- T2	Male graduate from KASP who has joined the labour market in KSA
UK, London 14/1/2016	2- N2	Female student who is still studying in the UK

Table 5: Semi-Structured Interviews

From the findings of the interviews it has been established that while undertaking a course under a scholarship programme, certain self-administered skills are developed within an individual. Soft skills are relatively important for the development of the personality of an individual. Labour market expectations are changing; therefore, organisations in KSA are in dire need of qualified professionals, and so KSA is investing in the development of human capital to achieve strategic goals. For example, they have initiated the Saudization programme, which aims to replace non-Saudi professionals with Saudis and solve unemployment among young Saudis. As mentioned in the previous chapters, KSA is aware of the global economy and the openness of the trade market. Therefore, the country is undergoing a wave of reform and a complete overhaul of its human capital.

Earlier, there were limited options available to the students, but with the help of diverse courses initiated by KASP, students can now acquire additional

information related to their field. This has contributed to diversifying the knowledge base of the students, which will enable them to undertake future challenges in an effective manner. Moreover, KSA students are willing to acquire better educational qualifications in order to build better career paths. The educational system of KSA has some significant shortcomings, as it has lacked global industry exposure. The Saudi government has acknowledged that a good education system within the country will serve as a cornerstone for its economic development.

In respect of the contribution of the scholarship programme to the development of management skills among the students, it has been deduced from the interview findings that in order to develop a globally competitive educational infrastructure in KSA, time management is crucial to managing different tasks and activities effectively. To excel in the corporate world, time management is one of the major aspects that can lead to growth and survival. Thus, it is imperative for Saudi students to acquire time management skills, in order to complete different tasks in an efficient manner. It has also been concluded that the KSA education system has been criticised on many grounds. Therefore, the students of KSA made a shift towards acquiring education from foreign universities, which enabled them to take up better job positions in their respective fields (AUCC, 2011). Students can focus on different areas as there is immense flexibility built into the programme, which means they can cultivate diverse interests. It has been identified that KASP, initiated by the government of KSA, has a well-defined and well-structured curriculum with regular assessments and assignments (Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012).

The analysis of the findings also reveals that teamwork is essential in today's business environment as it helps to bring fresh insights from different perspectives. In addition to this, group work is relatively critical to the growth and development of students, as students can share their perspectives with others to facilitate knowledge sharing. Teamwork is essential for the overall personal development of students. Teamwork is also relatively important for Saudi students to encourage them to adapt to different cultures and engage with students belonging to different ethnicities. Further, as the university is a platform where numerous students from diverse cultures and nationalities learn and study together, it enables KASP students to learn more effective teamwork strategies and develop key team management skills.

Further, in the context of the significance of human capital investment in KSA, the analysis of the interview findings revealed that improved employment and career outcomes are ensured if Saudi students have the necessary practical exposure to management skills. Management skills are relatively important in today's contemporary business environment. In this context, when one of the respondents was asked to assess whether she felt qualified for employment, she identified the need to acquire practical experience in the field of education. It has been concluded that, with the significant attempts made by the Saudi government in the field of education, the youth of KSA will be able to acquire favourable employment in their home country. This will enable companies to replace their foreign expatriates with a skilled Saudi workforce, which will strengthen the economic position of the nation. As mentioned in the introductory chapters, the economy of KSA is mainly reliant on oil exports; therefore, with the help of the

scholarship programme, qualified professionals could emerge in a wider variety of fields, which in turn will help in the overall development of KSA.

In respect of the challenges encountered by the women while undertaking the scholarship programmes, it has been concluded that the KSA higher education system has been revolutionised and women are provided with considerable options to achieve better educational opportunities abroad. The only difficulty faced while taking up a scholarship programme was attaining a signed paper from a male guardian (Mahram) to facilitate the whole procedure.

It was observed that the situation has improved significantly for women and they can now attain a better educational qualification in order to develop their career. The government of KSA has realised the significance of a skilled workforce and made it a priority to improve human resource capabilities by improving the quality of the education system. Saudi women are inclined to attain a better educational qualification in order to acquire better jobs back in KSA, which in turn will have a positive impact on the economy of KSA. However, they are still tied somewhat due to the requirement for male guardian permission and accompaniment, which is a limitation of women's freedom and the right to independence. It has also been concluded from the research findings that providing quality education has emerged as a key concern for the development of youth in KSA. It has become evident from the findings that Saudi women are more willing to grasp new and diversified knowledge by communicating with people from different ethnicities.

In addition to this, Saudi women seem to be adept at gathering all of the relevant knowledge from various sources, in order to stay abreast of new developments.

They do not simply rely on theoretical knowledge, but also make significant attempts to acquire practical insights to help them to undertake future job challenges effectively. With the initiation of the scholarship programme, new insights are imparted to the students, which broadens their knowledge base, thereby helping to bring about sustainable democracies.

5.5 Themes and Classifications of Data

A researcher identifies themes and classifications of data from the survey, focus groups and semi-structured interview transcripts (Gibbs, 2010), and these can form a bridge between qualitative and quantitative analysis. Klenke (2015, P.102) argues that thematic analysis is a process of 'encoding qualitative information'. The themes are as follows:

5.5.1. Theme 1: Role of Scholarship Programme in Skill Enhancement

While undertaking a course under a scholarship programme, certain self-administered skills are developed within an individual to deliver competent results. Soft skills are relatively critical for the development of the personality of an individual. Labour market expectations are changing; therefore, organisations in KSA are in dire need of qualified professionals, and so KSA is investing in the development of human capital to achieve strategic goals. For example, they have initiated the Saudization programme, which aims to replace non-Saudi professionals with Saudis and solve unemployment among young Saudis. As mentioned in the previous chapters, KSA is aware of the global economy and the openness of the trade market. Therefore, the country is undergoing a wave of reform and a complete overhaul of its human capital.

When respondents were asked about the skills acquired during their time as KASP students, it was stated that certain skills are inherently developed over a period of time, and students gained skills and became open-minded and accepting of change. In KSA, there is a diverse range of people with different qualifications and competencies; therefore, individuals develop their skills independently. The majority of respondents to the questionnaire strongly agreed with the statement related to the enhancement of their time management and work skills, while the rest varied. The reason for that become clear in the focus groups and interviews. The female students in focus group III revealed that the scholarship programme had been very useful in helping them inculcate new skills and hone their existing skills, making them equivalent to men in terms of business acumen and excellence. However, the respondents of the individual interviews stated that the education system is quite different in Britain, which facilitates the development of the student in an efficient manner. The education system in other developed nations is programmed to impart necessary skills and competencies to the students (Independent Commission on Fees, 2014). Also, the respondents developed a strong connection with other international students attending courses and learned about other cultures from the neighbourhood and community where they were staying. Students responding in focus groups encountered problems in interacting with different cultures. However, gradually, they developed good relationships with their neighbours and colleagues in the university. Although initially, some were scared of people from different cultures, as mentioned above, and did not expect to be on good terms with them, they experienced positive relationships with people from other cultures and

communities and learned to accept the others from different backgrounds and different religions.

The interviews with the students revealed that they can find out things more quickly in the UK than they had ever done before, and they were eager to learn more. This is because of the perceived respect and proper treatment they receive from professors and staff and the general environment in the universities. In this regard, one female student (M) stated:

> *'Public education and public health should be changed. The government should use and benefit from us, from the knowledge and ideas we brought from abroad in order to create positive change. We should work in all fields and deal directly with people.'*

Male student (T1) observed:

> *'Class discussions in KSA are different from here, intellectually different. In KSA your teacher is like a guardian, he directs you and you have to follow and obey, you try to win his approval. Here in Britain, teachers and supervisors treat you with respect to your humanity and to your brain.'*

Female student (A) added: 'In KSA we have to listen and obey'. Further, in response to my question about change and acceptance of other cultures, students explained that they kept to themselves when they first joined the university; for them, it was an open society. Through time, they mixed with international students and communicated with those from different cultures; they felt they had learned to accept different cultures and to adapt to change.

Although some preferred to communicate only with Saudis, they explained how they felt different and how they wanted to change the environment when they returned home. In this regard, a male student (T1) stated: 'Before my arrival in Britain, I had the idea that they are all bad, their culture is bad and their mistakes

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cannot be fixed. Now I have learned to respect what I see from all cultures.' Male student (A) concurred: 'after coming to this country the situation changed, my judgement on others changed and I learned to respect their cultures.' Male student (I) observed:

> *'I interacted and communicated a lot with British people in the neighbourhood and the university; we used to go out together, but to be honest, I preferred to deal with Saudis because it was easier for me to deal with someone I share the same culture with. I did not isolate myself from others and I still communicate with them.'*

Most participants find that the education system in KSA is different from the UK's education system. Back in KSA, students do not have the chance to be creative or to express ideas; they all receive orders and obey. They became more responsible, confident and creative through studying in the UK. In this regard, a male student (T1) stated:

> *The teacher in Britain listens to you and lets your mind speak freely; you can express your opinions and he or she will discuss them with you. Here, we are able to express our own thoughts, thoughts that are neutral and that we formed from our readings, thinking and experiences, but in KSA teachers are only there to criticise you.*

However, some students also held contrary opinions and did not find the culture of Britain to be helpful and encouraging for them. In this regard, one female student (F) stated:

> *'About British culture [...] they keep to themselves; it is tough to make friendship with them, no-one supports or helps you if they're not from your country or someone you know well. They are isolated [...] people with business minds [...] They don't accept foreigners in Britain.'*

Earlier, there were limited options available to the students, but with the help of diverse courses initiated by KASP, students can now acquire additional information related to their field. This has contributed to diversifying the knowledge base of the students, which will enable them to undertake future challenges in an effective manner. Moreover, KSA students are willing to acquire better educational qualifications in order to build better career paths. The educational system of KSA has some intense shortcomings, as it has lacked global industry exposure. It was evident that the higher education system of KSA was not consistent with recent trends. Therefore, students have been opting for scholarship programmes to develop certain skills and competencies required in the global business environment.

The education system of KSA is undergoing significant reform, which is also providing ample opportunities for the advancement of women in their profession. To support this, the scholarship programme developed in KSA is student-focused and facilitates a reduction in the dependency of learners. Students adopt a self-directed approach to learning, where they acquire relevant knowledge as per their needs and preferences. Also, certain technical competencies are also developed that are essential to attaining excellence in the corporate world. Self-directed learning has resulted in a generation of autonomous learners who actively engage in learning, with a learning goal. It has also been identified that the current scenario has changed to a phenomenal extent, wherein increased emphasis is laid on the development of women, which was not the case in KSA a few years ago, as was also stated by one of the respondents.

Male student (T1) observed:

> *'I believe KASP has helped women to have a vision and the right to decide for herself. Even men see a woman as equals in decision-making […] Women in KSA did not have rights: no right to express their views or take decisions and they did not have the right to occupy a high position. Here, the situation is different as here I don't just see her as a body, I see her brain.'*

In the past few years, it has been identified that the Ministry of Higher Education in KSA is making significant attempts to send their male students to undertake higher education in developed countries (Aronson, 2002). The prime aim is to draw up and equip Saudi students with the required skills and competencies to enable them to fill a desirable role in the corporate world. To this end, the Saudi government has been sponsoring students to pursue better educational degrees from other countries, in order to bring significant transformation within the nation. It has been acknowledged by the Saudi government that a good education system within the country will serve as a cornerstone for its economic development.

Due to a rising population and changing labour market conditions, the government has suggested that they could bring about a significant transition in the higher education system by laying a greater emphasis on improving the quality and quantity of the education and training. It has been witnessed over the past few years that KSA is developing and implementing a comprehensive education reform programme that is facilitating the development of a skilled and informed workforce. In 2005, KASP was developed in order to encourage KSA students to acquire training and education from higher educational institutions located abroad, specifically in developed countries such as the UK, USA, Germany and others.

Additionally, it was identified that some of the policies initiated by educational system policy makers in KSA emphasise the concept of memorisation. Rather than memorisation, students should be provided with a clear understanding of the concepts in order to enable fuller comprehension. The Saudi education system emphasises religious and literary teachings, rather than focusing on the technical education of the students (Atherton and Linkens, 2014). In this sense, the students are more inclined to attain a better education from other countries. However, the students also reported some pertinent challenges that were caused because of the ineffectual role played by the Cultural Attaché. The students reported numerous difficulties caused because of the attaché. In this regard, one female student (R) stated:

> *'One must personally go to the attaché to sort out issues and solve problems. This takes time that is not available to most of us; our circumstances at work and study would not allow us the time. Communicating with them through email and telephone is very difficult because they don't answer them.'*

Male student (T1) complained:

> *'I have proof that the attaché is not supportive. I sent an application three months ago to attend a conference; I was a participant in that conference.*
>
> *The attaché asked me first for the invitation letter, so I sent them the letter. They rejected my application and told me to send the conference programme, which I did but again they rejected my application and said they need an official letter from the conference organisers. I decided to attend the conference and paid the full cost from my own money; I paid for my travel, my accommodation and food. The academic conference was crucial for me as a scholar and for the status of my country [...] I swear to God the people in the attaché try to find anything to stop the students' applications [...] .There must be a revision to the attaché policy and attitude.'*

> *'I am not satisfied at all with the attaché office; I did not get any assistance from the attaché [...] Definitely they are not supportive. Now I try my best to achieve everything by myself and not communicate with them.'*

The same issue was identified as an obstacle for students interviewed in focus groups when I asked them if the role of the Cultural Attaché was supportive to students. Male student (A) stated: 'I also believe that the attaché was not yet prepared to receive such large numbers of students. For me, I believe the psychological harm they caused is enough to be an obstacle.' One female student (Y) who was interviewed in focus group IV also confirms this:

> *'I did not face many obstacles [...] Every time I needed something; I had to drive from California to the attaché in Washington. Unfortunately, the obstacles I had, were with my society and not with the Western one.'*

5.5.2 Theme 2: Development of Management Skills among the Students

In order to develop a globally competitive educational infrastructure in KSA, time management is very important to administer diversified tasks and activities effectively. In order to excel in the corporate world, time management is one of the major aspects that can lead to growth and survival. Thus, it is imperative for Saudi students to acquire time management skills, in order to complete diversified tasks in an effective manner. The KSA education system has been criticised on many grounds. Therefore, the students of KSA made a shift towards acquiring education from foreign universities, which enabled them to take up better job positions in their respective fields (AUCC, 2011). Acquiring their education from foreign universities allowed students to manage their time in an effective manner, as different tasks were allocated one at a time. The female

respondent in the interview was affirmative about the time management aspect and noted that it allowed her to handle tasks with ease. In addition to this, the respondent female in focus group IV stated that several tasks could not be handled effectively at a particular point in time, but that the organisation of tasks is relatively important in the work setting. When female student (Y) was asked about the benefits gained from KASP, her answer was as followed:

> *'I learned to adapt myself to the environment that I live in; I learned to make use of any available time. I believe it is good that one looks into other people experiences and learn from them, dealing with different people from different cultural and environmental background has benefited me a lot.'*

But for some students, they believed they had skills before joining KASP but with learning in the developed environment their skills were polished. As male student (S) said in this respect:

> *'Because of the nature of my job in banks, I was already a disciplined person; my work required a high level of professionalism in order to achieve it with success, especially that it involved foreigners; it meant we had to meet the international standards that are prevalent in the West. I had two reasons for studying abroad; the first is to improve and support my personal, academic potentials, the second was to support the concept of professionalism in work. Despite that I was professional in my job; still, the scholarship supported me more and its effect was very obvious in my work performance. I became more professional; I started using tables in classifying and prioritising the business according to the time and the source of the job, for instance, the chair of the bank first then the manager, etc. The programme made my sense of responsibility stronger than before.*

With an educational degree from a foreign university, students felt able to manage their time and adopt a self-directed approach to learning. Thus, it can be inferred that acquiring a higher educational degree from premier universities provides substantial benefits to learners and ensures better job market positions.

It has been identified that a flexible approach for students was provided by KASP (not time bound), which has proved to be highly beneficial for the growth of each individual. Students can focus on different areas as there is immense flexibility built into the programme, which means they can cultivate diverse interests. It has been identified that KASP, initiated by the government of KSA, has a well-defined and well-structured curriculum with regular assessments and assignments (Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012).

In contrast to this statement, the majority of respondents noted that the programme restricts the practice of team learning. Students are isolated and they do not get a chance to interact with different groups and colleagues. This is a major limitation identified by some respondents, as it restricts the overall development of the student. Teamwork is essential in today's business environment as it helps to bring fresh insights from different perspectives. In addition to this, group work is essential for the growth and development of students, as students can share their perspectives with others to facilitate knowledge sharing (Coulson, Roberts and Taylor, 2014). When one respondent was asked about his level of comfort when working in a group, he stated that teamwork provides substantial benefits to an individual, as it leads to the emergence of new and innovative ideas. One of the respondents also stated that students used to meet their group members on a weekly basis, to discuss project issues and conduct team activities, in order to gain the perspectives of other individuals in an effective manner.

Group work is essential for the overall personal development of students. Teamwork is also relatively important for Saudi students to encourage them to

adapt to different cultures and engage with students belonging to different ethnicities. It was observed that there is a cultural gap between the students of other nations and the students of KSA. Group work, therefore, will benefit students by broadening their horizons to an exceptional extent.

The government of KSA has increased funding for overseas education, due to rising labour market expectations. The youth of KSA needs to adapt to the changing market dynamics in order to avail themselves of upcoming opportunities in the market. Thus, it has been identified that this programme has the potential to bridge the gap between the existing education system and prevailing job market expectations (EVO SYS, 2015). Communication with others is relatively important to gain fresh new insight and practical knowledge about the world. In addition to this, communication should not only be restricted to local Saudi people but should include foreign students as well, in order to enhance existing skills and capabilities.

Furthermore, it was concluded that the Saudi education system is not aligned with the international educational standards prevalent in other developed countries. Therefore, through the acquisition of educational degrees from foreign universities, the youth of KSA will gain wider knowledge, thereby improving the Saudi education system and helping to make it consistent with the global educational structure (Gornitzka, Kogan and Amaral, 2006). The students of KSA are enrolling in various leading universities in the UK, in order to benefit from better job opportunities in the market by enhancing their skills and knowledge to an extraordinary extent.

The findings of the interviews also revealed that students make significant efforts to learn time management because they understand its role and significance in enhancing their career. It has also been observed that the scholarship programme makes the students more responsible towards their academic study, career and family. The students do not need to be reminded of their responsibilities and are able to solve the majority of the problems they encounter by themselves. The scholarship programme also enables the students to gain the experience of teamwork, which they are not exposed to in KSA. Further, as the university is a platform where numerous students from diverse cultures and nationalities learn and study together, it enables KASP students to learn more effective teamwork strategies and develop key team management skills. In this regard, a male student (A) still studying in Britain stated:

> *'I did not learn it in KSA because I only studied the primary stage there. I had three or four experiences of teamwork when I was a student at secondary school and have gained more experience at the university. The difference between the two is the number of students; in the university the number of students is bigger and they come from different nationalities and different cultural backgrounds.'*

The students realise that working with teams and groups is highly significant for their present and future academic and career development. They also believe that team working helps them in developing knowledge and communication skills, and is useful for future employment.

The students were also found to be well equipped with technical skills and are proficient with technical tools such as the Internet and email, which they use while communicating with friends and family members. It serves as a very

effective means for them to communicate and exchange information. In this regard, a male student (S) stated:

> *'Yes, of course, technology is very important and I use it in my communication with doctors, friends and family. I also use it with friends who are studying the same course as me but who live in other countries; we exchange information.'*

The scholarship programme is also a highly significant opportunity for the students to develop effective presentation skills. The students pursuing the programme in Britain consider themselves more empowered in discussions and negotiations; they can understand the questions asked and answer or explain them with confidence. The modules and assignments set by the scholarship programme also enable the students to become more organised, since they learn to manage their time and undertake effective planning of their academic work and personal life. With respect to planning, a male student (T2) explained: 'Yes, if I have important things to do, I write them down on paper, and then tick off tasks as I finish them so that I know what I have completed.' These findings indicate that the scholarship provides a significant opportunity for students to learn effective management skills, which are helpful for them in their future academic and career development.

In focus group IV, a male student (A) responded to the question 'Has the scholarship helped you to be more creative in your work and ideas?' He gave the following answer:

> *'I learned about many other cultures, London has all ethnicities and cultures mixing together. I learned to think with groups and other students; I also learned to plan more for my time. I always felt that the more opinions I hear from others, the more I become open to others and think better.'*

Female student (A) answered the same question as follows:

> *'In the West they allow you the opportunity to produce and to be creative; I studied language in my country, and I studied information system in the US, this academic switch between the two different fields was not possible to happen in my homeland.'*

Data from the questionnaire shows that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they were better able to adapt to change and had become more open-minded. Although some of the younger Saudi population seems to be more flexible in accepting change and being open to new ideas, some feel they cannot accept change and are not willing to live in a free society. I happened to meet some of the wives of male students who are studying in the UK; I found that some wives are isolated and do not accept change, because their husbands do not want them to mix with others except with Saudi women.

5.5.3 Theme 3: Significance of Human Capital Investment in KSA

Saudi students are sent to leading universities in order to acquire higher education degrees. It has been stated by many of the respondents that, through the acquisition of higher education degrees from leading universities across the globe, Saudi students have been helped to embrace other cultures and work ethics.

Improved employment and career outcomes are ensured if Saudi students have the necessary practical exposure to management skills. Management skills are relatively important in today's contemporary business environment. In this context, when one of the respondents was asked to assess whether she felt qualified for employment, she identified the need to acquire practical experience in the field of education (Kouame, 2012). In every job sphere, management skills

are necessary to deal with future challenges effectively. The respondent stated that theoretical knowledge was gained related to the field of management, but no practical insight had been attained.

It has been concluded that, with the significant attempts made by the Saudi government in the field of education, the youth of KSA will be able to acquire favourable employment in their home country. This will enable companies to replace their foreign expatriates with a skilled Saudi workforce, which will strengthen the economic position of the nation. As mentioned in the introductory chapters, the economy of KSA is mainly reliant on oil exports; therefore, with the help of the scholarship programme, qualified professionals could emerge in a wider variety of fields, which in turn will assist in the overall development of KSA.

In essence, government bodies initiated various programmes in order to eliminate inadequacies in the education system of KSA. Considering the current scenario, significant numbers of Saudi students are acquiring educational degrees from UK universities to improve their positions in finding employment in the marketplace at home. The academic standards in other top universities located abroad provide further substantial learning opportunities to the students. A number of observers believe that programmes initiated by the Saudi government provide abundant theoretical knowledge to students, but the lack of practical experience hampers their performance in the job market. It can be inferred that practical experience is essential for managing their work in an effective manner. One respondent, a lecturer, considers real-life work experience in their field to be quite relevant for undertaking their job role effectively. Moreover, practical

exposure ensures they have an understanding of changing market dynamics in the education sector, enabling them to accept job responsibilities successfully. An intensive training course would enable the respondent to adopt different teaching methodologies that are consistent with current protocols, to help in the delivery of quality learning (Wang and Victor, 2012). On the other hand, the respondent acquiring a master's degree in the field of neurology stated that she has the required skills set to attain a position in the UK. The students currently studying in Britain also revealed that the scholarship programme enabled them to develop more effective thinking and creative skills. The students also believe that the scholarship programme in Britain helped them to develop speaking and listening abilities, which would be difficult to acquire in KSA. When the students were asked in the questionnaire which sector they preferred to join in their future job, 53.2%, preferred the governmental sector. The students aspire to acquire employment in the government sector rather than in the private sector, which indicates their preference for less challenging and more secure employment. One female student (Y) graduated from the UK and gained a master's degree and joined the Saudi labour market. Her experience with the private sector is better:

> *'To the private sector, I have already attended an interview and have been offered a job; they are very happy to have me working with them and they like my potentials, they are very supportive; the director is British. I believe I will be more useful in the economic field than in the educational one.'*

But for another female (N) the future is not clear. She has just been awarded a Ph.D. and will go back to her job at the university. She doesn't think that Saudi society will accept change, nor will it accept views coming from abroad. She

believes it is as difficult to change Saudi society today as it was for her father who had a scholarship in the 80s:

> *'I will be back to the university and I don't know how the situation will be. I used to work there as a cooperative staff; I hope I can bring positive change to the university. The problem is they totally reject changes and see any changes that are coming from abroad as being only to control them, for this reason, their rejection is strong. My father who worked for both sectors and studied in the West used to tell me how he was full of enthusiasm and ambitions to create some changes, but soon everything would collapse and die because of their rejection. I believe the old evaluation and situation remains the same. It is the same 1980s experiences.'*

5.5.4 Theme 4: Challenges Confronting Women in taking up a Scholarship Programme

When KASP students were asked in the questionnaire about their views on equal opportunities for women in the area of study and employment, 32% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. When asked in the focus groups, females find it is difficult for them to study the majors they want, because specific majors are not open for females in the programme. This female student (S) said:

> *'Yes, in the field of engineering they don't appoint females except for few companies. For specialisations, and in general; the market opportunity is not suitable for youth, boys or girls. They also don't count master degree qualification when we apply for jobs unless it is accompanied by experience. It is not a real situation. However if the experience is there, we are hugely desired.'*

But for female student (Z), the situation is different for she believes that with the Saudization programme the women find jobs and opportunities: 'It depends, now they are forced to accept us because of Saudization programme.'

When asked in the interviews about the difficulties confronted by women applying for scholarship programmes, one respondent suggested that no issues were raised for women wishing to undertake educational degrees. In fact, the KSA higher education system has been revolutionised and women are provided with considerable options to achieve better educational opportunities abroad. The only difficulty faced while taking up a scholarship programme was attaining a signed paper from a male guardian (Mahram) to facilitate the whole procedure. A female respondent (A) from focus group I said:

> *'For me it was the Mahram issue, especially when we need to extend our course or get more supportive studies. Upgrading our studies was a real problem for girls.'*

On the positive side, a number observed that the situation has improved significantly for women and they can now attain a better educational qualification in order to develop their careers. The government of KSA has realised the significance of a skilled workforce and made it a priority to improve human resource capabilities by improving the quality of the education system. Saudi women are more inclined to attain a better educational qualification in order to acquire better jobs back in KSA, which in turn will have a positive impact on the economy of KSA. However, they are still hampered somewhat due to the requirement for a male guardian's permission and accompaniment, which is a limitation of women's freedom and the right to independence. The female students consider the situation in Britain to be better than in KSA, in respect of female students' rights and opportunities. In this regard, female student (R) observed: 'The situation for women is even worse; society does not allow her to express her thoughts'. Another female student (R) agreed:

> *'Back home they prefer to appoint only men because the Saudi environment is skewed in their favour [...] The group I was with in KSA was not totally supportive of me as a woman; cultural differences were obstacles in our teamwork [...] I had the opportunity to work for seven months in KSA moving between the cities of Riyadh, Jeddah and Al-Khobar. There was acceptance of female doctors; maybe the hospital did not accept them, but guards and soldiers did not mind. However, the problem was in the team we worked with. Men did not like females to be in a higher position than them or to become a head of the department. This is still the society's view on women.'*

Furthermore, in this context, respondents observed no difficulty while choosing a specialty under this programme, but there were no scholarships available in some fields, such as mathematics. Thus, it was recommended to opt for computer science, as that is essential for the growth and development of an individual. In the global market, information technology plays a crucial role that provides an edge to competitors (London First and PWC, 2015).

The government of KSA is focusing on emphasising the role of women in the business and service sectors. The prime aim of the Saudi government is to develop a globally competent workforce by giving equal opportunities to Saudi women, which will bring significant transformations within the country. The Saudi education system assists students to develop an understanding of different cultures, which also brings significant improvements in their personal characteristics. It has been observed that the Saudi government has made significant attempts to develop an exemplary educational structure that does not hamper the growth and learning of the female population. In the past few decades, due to cultural barriers and gender segregation, there has been low participation of women in the workforce, which has also hampered the economy of the nation. Women of KSA appear to be now utilising the initiatives

undertaken by the government authorities, as they are entering into the educational field by acquiring the relevant skills and competencies (Simonson and Schlosser, 2009).

The government initiatives focus on socio-economic development and bringing about significant changes in order to develop and grow the economy of the nation. Providing quality education is a key concern for the development of the youth in KSA. It has become evident from the findings that Saudi women are more willing to grasp new and diversified knowledge by communicating with people from different ethnicities. In addition to this, Saudi women seem to be adept at gathering all of the relevant knowledge from various sources, in order to stay consistent with new developments. They do not simply rely on theoretical knowledge, but also make significant attempts to acquire practical insights to help them to undertake future job challenges effectively. With the initiation of the scholarship programme, new insights are imparted to the students to broaden their knowledge base.

A female graduate (Y) of KASP who returned to work in KSA said: 'what attracted my attention most is the total segregation between men and women; they were in different sections. Saudi culture is still dominant, even here in Britain; everything was done separately, eating, drinking and talking.' While a male student (M) pointed out: 'As Saudis, we are very insular.' Furthermore, another female student (Y) observed: 'This is one of the difficulties and challenges that will face scholars when they go back to KSA; whether to follow society or to live their lives as they used to live here [UK]'.

The interview with the female students currently pursuing the scholarship programme in Britain revealed that they encounter some pertinent challenges. In this regard, the major obstacle is the feeling of loneliness and alienation, especially among the women who travel away from their families and home, and live with their guardians (Mahram). When they were asked about opportunities, one female student (F) stated:

> *'Yes, I believe with regard to this issue of Mahram that men are in a more comfortable position than women. A man can join a woman during her scholarship, as a Mahram, start his own study here and continue even if she returns.'*

Although the scholarship has provided opportunities for 'Mahram' to study and have a governmental scholarship with the female student he is travelling with; the Mahram also creates difficulties as he is forced to stay with the female student all the time. However, the students also revealed that, in respect of the rights and opportunities to learning, the female students do not face any inequality and always receive fair treatment in education. The women assume the same rights as men, though they do encounter barriers in relation to religion and culture. Further, when it came to the issue of women's empowerment and equality, both males and females believed that women had been given the same opportunities in scholarships and in selecting their studies, but that they were not equal in terms of freedom and independence.

5.6 Conclusion

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has started various initiatives to support the development of human capital and improve the employability skills of the young generation. The Saudi Arabian education system has several drawbacks and

weaknesses which have encouraged students to continue their higher study from developed countries. (It is also interesting to note that a majority of students preferred to study in the United States rather than the UK.) Human capital investment is a major reform initiative, which provides scholarships to students to gain knowledge and experience in developed countries. In the data analysis, the responses were obtained from KASP students by three methods, namely, a survey, focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

In the survey, a total of 200 responses were collected. The survey findings reveal that the ratio of young students was relatively low; however, the ratio of male and female participants was almost equal. The small proportion of young students is a weakness of the programme, as the KASP is focused on the skill development of the young generation. The high number of female candidates signifies the fact that KASP is the first programme to open the doors for Saudi women to study abroad. The survey results also show that the time management and work skills of the respondents were increased. Furthermore, in the questionnaire, individual questions were asked regarding whether KASP helps the respondents to take responsibility in difficult situations, and noted that it improves flexibility and team skills, IT skills, negotiation and planning. The survey results show that all of the respondents strongly agreed that KASP had contributed to the improvement of their qualifications. In the research, four focus groups were formed of the students under KASP scholarships.

A qualitative study was conducted via the medium of focus groups to seek out information regarding the evolution of soft skills and skill development of the students. One focus group was only formulated of female students, so their

problems and gender barriers could be explored in the study. The findings reveal that the business organisations in the home country prefer to give employment to the students who have studied abroad and gained some experience. It can be concluded that the scholarship programme increases the soft skills and skill development of students. Although female students benefitted from the scholarship initiative, they mainly returned to employment in the government sector. Females appear reluctant to take initiatives in self-employment and to set up their own business. Some weaknesses are also highlighted in the KASP programme, such as no guidance being provided on career choice and cultural problems. Mahram was also a major hindrance in the case of female students. In addition, women were also not allowed to study certain specialisations.

The findings of the semi-structured interviews revealed and confirmed that studying abroad imparts various specific skills in an individual, as well as assisting in overall personal development. Because they had to work within tight deadlines, they learned time management skills. The Saudi Arabian education system has several drawbacks and weaknesses that encouraged the students to continue their advanced studies from developed countries. Furthermore, the participants concluded that the programme had developed their teamwork and group work skills. Although it can be inferred from the interview data that the young KSA students face discrimination in foreign countries and find it difficult to present themselves confidently, it was also found that the young Saudi men and women have a fast learning curve, and that they easily adapt to different circumstances and do not rely solely on theoretical knowledge.

Chapter Six

Discussions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to integrate the findings obtained from the documentary analysis in the form of the literature review with those from the survey, focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. This chapter aims to address the research questions and determine the most appropriate answer for the overarching research question. The discussion about the overall research findings has helped in obtaining a logical and relevant conclusion for the research. On the basis of the overall discussion about the research findings and the issues that have emerged from the research discussion, the government of KSA has proposed some key and pertinent recommendations, which will be helpful in fulfilling the economic policy goals of the country.

6.2 Discussion of the Research Findings

The main focus of this study is to examine the impact of KASP on human capital investment (HCI) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In addition to this, the study also aims to understand the government's strategies for bringing about positive changes in the economy of KSA, with regard to HCI.

On the basis of the data findings, it can be stated that students in KSA have a preference for studying overseas and attaining a better quality of education. Within the education system in KSA, students are imparted with an education based on religious training and, therefore, the basic methodological education is

neglected. In this regard, KASP has proved to be helpful in transferring students abroad for a better quality of education. The students who studied abroad with the help of the programme gained time management skills, amongst others. In addition, the programme also assisted in meeting the demand in the Saudi labour market by providing quality, skilled workers.

One of the drawbacks of this programme is that students fail to work in a team to improve productivity, particularly at the beginning of their scholarship, but after that most students adapted the skills of team working. Saudi students are insular in many cases and prefer not to communicate with other cultures. Additionally, some Saudi women prefer not to communicate with Saudi men and keep a distance when working together in a team. The literature also supports the argument that the government of KSA is making significant efforts to enhance skilled labour to meet the needs of the job market (Limoncelli, 2006). The methods of providing education in KSA are not considered as effective because they fail to provide global exposure to students, the research reveals that the scholarship programme has helped the students of KSA in understanding different cultures and gaining knowledge about ethical ways of working. Practical experience, along with theoretical knowledge, is necessary to equip students for the job market.

In terms of potential difficulties for women entering the scholarship programme, it was found that there was no extra effort required. The educational system in KSA has changed in a positive manner for women and, therefore, provides a significant number of opportunities for them. Career opportunities for women have been taken seriously in KSA. In addition, women were also found to be more

interested in gaining the most appropriate skills for the job market. With regard to the subjects available on the scholarship programme, mathematics and engineering (for women) were found to be neglected. Accordingly, the subject of computer science was given more attention for the purpose of the scholarship.

The government of KSA believes in providing equal opportunities to women and making the workforce appropriate for the global job market. The literature also states that the students of KSA need to move to universities located abroad, in order to become fit for the global job market. The environment in KSA is supportive of women in terms of attaining skills to enable them to enhance their careers and the emphasis has been on practical experience for enhancing skills (Forsyth, 2013). The attainment of theoretical knowledge alone has proved to be insufficient in making the workforce fit for the global job market. Women in KSA have also shown their inclination towards attaining a better quality of education. However, male dominance and authority over women is still an obstacle. Although the government supports women's rights and equality, when it comes to regulations and procedures in KASP, some women still suffer.

The data findings revealed an interest in subjects that would result in MBA and MSc qualifications from KASP. They were chosen by students with immense dedication and the relevant courses were completed successfully. Saudi students went to universities abroad to pursue their education and most opted for courses lasting three years. The scholarship programme helped in terms of enhancing students' time management skills. This helped in improving their managerial skills. It has been suggested in data collected from the questionnaire that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that they had enhanced their time

management skills. However, some students' response to this question in the focus groups interviews was that they had such skills before they studied abroad; others said that KASP enhanced their time management.

The literature also suggests that the scholarship programme has been very effective in developing the overall skills of the KSA students. The students have undertaken different courses and this has helped to improve their capabilities (Murray, 2008). The scholarship programme provided the students with plenty of options in relation to improving the quality of their education.

The data also reveals that the scholarship programme has been very helpful in enhancing skills for managing difficult situations and this has given students an extra edge. Other essential skills, such as working in a team and being flexible in different circumstances, were also improved in KASP students. The other benefits of sending students from KSA to universities abroad were improvements in their knowledge with regard to communication through social media and information technology, and also their presentation skills. The literature also states that the scholarship programme has helped in adding value to the students. The appropriate skills required for working in the global job sector were found in students, as a result of KASP (Kogei, 2008). They were provided with exposure to all fields and this helped them in facing the competition in different job markets and employed positions.

Many other essential work skills were imparted through KASP. Some of these skills included: a capacity to manage change, an ability to be accepting and open minded, a power to enhance their creativity, an improvement in their speaking

and listening skills and a command of skills relating to appearance, namely dress code and etiquette.

The data from the study revealed other important attitudes. It was clear that students in KSA have a preference for the government sector when seeking jobs, and that the private sector in KSA is the least popular for KASP students when seeking employment. The social culture of KSA has been changing and women are now also considered for different kinds of jobs. The scholarship programme has put emphasis on the non-theoretical aspects of education and this has helped students in their overall development.

The data also reveals that students believed that a lot of emphasis was placed on the issue of etiquette in European culture. Since universities in the United Kingdom focus on discipline, the students learned to comply. Skills covering all aspects of management were imparted to the students in the scholarship programme. As a result of this training, students were sometimes overqualified for the jobs available in KSA.

There were complaints from the female students in relation to the Mahram issue in KASP. This was mainly concerned with seeking permission for some procedures, such as a course extension, where the Cultural Attaché was not supportive of women when it came to the Mahram authority. The literature also stated that the environment in universities abroad, particularly in the UK, requires students to be organised in their studies. In this way, they are able to learn better management skills. The universities abroad made students more capable, compared to the standards in KSA. In this context, students faced

employment problems after coming back to KSA from universities situated abroad.

The discussion of the data findings reflects the fact that the Ministry of Education and the Cultural Attaché do not seem to support KASP students in training or in female independence adequately. In addition, issues are taken care of by the students and universities only.

With the growth of KASP, the Cultural Bureau has also undergone significant changes in the structure and functions to ensure delivery of highly effective services for the existing and future students pursuing higher studies under the scholarship programme. The Cultural Bureau works directly under the supervision of the Cultural Attaché and helps in administering the scholarships to the students of KSA studying in the UK or the other countries of KASP (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014). The Cultural Bureau undertakes the administration of the scholarships according to the rules and policies of the government of KSA. In order to address its functions efficiently, the Cultural Bureau of KSA comprises of a Cultural Attaché Office and respective departments for finance and administration, academic and educational affairs, cultural and social affairs, academic relations and admissions, information technology and academic recognition and authentication. In addition to that, the Cultural Bureau also consists of some specialised units composed of larger departments that include admissions, advisors for private institutions, ESL preparation, graduate, undergraduate, medical, dependent and special needs students (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014).

The key mission of the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau is to facilitate the young Saudi male and female students to take advantage of high quality training, education and skill development in UK and US universities, and other countries where KASP runs, which are considered to be highly prestigious across the globe for their role in educating and training the students for successful career development. For this purpose, it provides a comprehensive range of supportive services that help in ensuring educational, cultural and social welfare of the Saudi Arabian students and their dependents in the UK and the US (Ministry of Education, 2014). In this regard, the vision of the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau is to assist the aim of Saudi Arabian government in undertaking an effective transformation from an oil-based economy to a knowledge-based economy with the help of strengthened international partnerships, a reputation for excellence in academic and scientific research and by providing the young students with an opportunity to study under world-class higher education systems (Ministry of Education, 2014).

One of the key initiatives taken by the Cultural Bureau in the UK is the Saudi student's conference, which is a unique event that is held to highlight the accomplishments and ground-breaking achievements of Saudi students at all levels and departments of the universities in the UK. The conference allows the students to present their skills and knowledge and present their abilities and potential to become future leaders, thinkers, scientists and innovators for KSA and the world (Saudi Students Conference, UK, 2016). It thus serves as a key forum to provide students with the opportunity to communicate and be acknowledged. It also serves as a crucial platform to encourage exchange of ideas

and networking for the students from different cultures and countries (Saudi Students Conference, UK, 2016).

However, despite the enlightened mission and vision established for the Cultural Bureau in the UK, it has been criticised for being ineffective in assisting students in learning and exploring more about international cultures or making students from other countries aware of their culture. This creates difficulty for the students to adjust in a culturally diverse environment. In addition to that, it has also been revealed from the examination of the literature that the Cultural Bureau in the UK spends a huge amount in organising the student conference. In spite of the expenditure, it is not very successful in meeting its purpose because it is attended only by Saudi students and not others from different nationalities. As a result, students do not have an opportunity to communicate with and present their accomplishments before the students of other countries.

The Cultural Bureau in the UK has also been criticised for not making optimum utilisation of the big budgets allocated to them for the development and support to the Saudi students in the UK. In this regard, it is recommended that the Cultural Attaché in the UK takes rigorous and strict measures to monitor the fund allocation undertaken by the Cultural Bureau and also guide it in the ways in which it can provide more supportive facilities to Saudi students in the UK.

The programme was popular with students and they recommended it to other students. There is less preference given to female candidates in relation to engineering jobs. In general, opportunities in the job market are not very favourable for candidates. Their master's degree is only recognised in the job market when it is accompanied by experience in the respective field. The

literature also supports the fact that KASP has been appreciated by the students of KSA and is considered to be independent of the hassles of government. However, women face restrictions in some areas. In this way, the options for jobs are reduced and become limited. Students of the scholarship programme face difficulties finding employment and this is generally due to external factors present in the job market.

The discussion of data findings shows that students were satisfied with KASP in relation to learning skills for working voluntarily. According to the students, the training for such skills is missing in KSA and therefore the United Kingdom provided a benefit in this regard. Another advantage of universities in the UK is that they encourage the concept of distance learning and students to get to learn a variety of subjects in this way. The literature also supports the fact that KASP provides extraordinary skills that are difficult to find in KSA. In this way, the scholarship programme is helpful for the growth and development of the students. In addition to this, UK universities prefer learning in an innovative manner and this was also noted to be helpful for the students (Yates, 2003).

The data findings also state that the skills of understanding and dealing with other team members are taught as part of the scholarship programme. Such skills are very helpful in building a team and, therefore, in increasing productivity. Furthermore, students were taught to be flexible to the changing external environment and, hence, easily adapt to change. The training in relation to analytical skills was also seen to be a significant part of the scholarship programme. The literature likewise shows that interpersonal skills training proved to be very useful for KASP students. Such skills were unique in relation to

the programme. As a part of the scholarship programme, students were made fit for survival in the external world.

The data findings reflect that the culture of KSA, in terms of segregating men and women, was found to continue among Saudi students in the United Kingdom. In this way, all of the activities for men and women occurred separately. This led to a restriction in communication between the two groups. The culture of KSA is strongly adhered to while students are in other countries, but this leads to certain limitations (Denton and Brown, 2009). For example, men and women do not have the freedom to communicate openly with one another.

The universities help by making payments for training students in the scholarship programme. In an ideal situation, the training of the students should happen during the course of the master's degree. The literature also states that training programmes on the scholarship are better for students in the early stages and this should be considered in terms of financing of the courses. Training courses are part of the university programmes, but if the student needs more training in a specific area of study, he or she has to apply to the Cultural Bureau which in many cases was not approved, and then motivated students end up having to pay for their courses themselves. This oversight is considered to be one of the drawbacks of the programme. The relationship between the Cultural Bureau and the students has been seen as an obstacle to some, especially women who are part of the programme.

Another important finding from the study was that soft skills are very important for management, in terms of time management and communication. The students were satisfied with the scholarship programme in relation to learning the skills

needed for communication and handling a variety of people. In the initial days of the scholarship programme, the Saudi students faced difficulties in interacting with students of other origins. Later on, this changed and they engaged more fully with students from other countries. This is because the KSA students realised that interacting with other students would be beneficial for the purposes of employment.

The literature also supports the notion that students from KSA (with the exception of a few) became more extrovert as time went on and, therefore, made more friends. In this way, students came out of isolation and the level of interaction increased (Barker, 2010). The concept of managing people was also introduced to KSA students during the scholarship programme.

6.3 Recommendations

On the basis of the discussion of the research findings, which has highlighted the key issues regarding the effectiveness of the scholarship programmes undertaken by the government of KSA, some recommendations in the form of policy reforms and programmes have been proposed. These recommendations can be helpful for KSA in improving its investment in human capital. These are delineated below:

6.3.1 Focus on the Key Success Factors while Planning for an Effective Education Sector Strategy

Although it has been identified from the literature that investment in the education sector and development of key reforms and programmes to enhance the education sector can play a crucial role in developing human capital, past

initiatives have not been able to achieve optimum success because of a lack of focus on some major success factors. Therefore, it is recommended that the government of KSA consider and focus on some key success factors while planning education sector strategy. In this regard, it is recommended that the education objectives must be based on socio-economic themes (Maroun et al., 2008). If the relationship between the key socio-economic elements is clarified, the policy can be implemented in a more effective and specific manner. The connection between the socio-economic themes and education objectives can be ensured in two ways: firstly, by establishing a dialogue between relevant stakeholders, such as labour departments, the business community, human capital development bodies and other labour bodies; secondly, by establishing measurable targets for the education sector. The targets must not only be measurable but must also be based on a higher level of socio-economic indicators, which means that a cause and effect relationship must be established between education objectives and socio-economic themes (Maroun et al., 2008).

The long-term strategic aims must be ambitious and effectively aligned with realistic milestones. Strategies in the education sector primarily cover a period of 10 to 15 years. In order to establish far-reaching impact, the goal of education policies should be to transform the socio-economic status of the country from one level to another. For this purpose, it is also essential that educational reformers in KSA are not tempted to establish over-ambitious goals that aim to resolve all socio-economic issues in a single attempt; rather, a reasonable number of priorities must be established and individually addressed (Gonzalez et al., 2008).

With this in mind, it is also essential to obtain a transparent assessment of the situation, where all weaknesses and shortcomings are acknowledged. For this purpose, an objective evaluation of the situation must be undertaken to identify all the main obstacles, gaps and goals in the current system and to determine an effective basis in which to address them. This is because when an issue is not acknowledged, no efforts are made to address it. Therefore, a full acknowledgement of weaknesses is essential to determine effective reforms.

Additionally, it is vital that the strategy is capable of acquiring broad support (Maroun et al., 2008). In order to achieve this, the different stakeholders must be convinced of the feasibility, objectivity and urgency of the initiatives required for the effective implementation of policy reforms. A transparent, open and inclusive strategy will be highly useful for the establishment of an effective framework for education sector reform in KSA.

6.3.2 Adopt an Education Sector Operating Model

It can further be recommended that an effective education sector operating model is adopted, which focuses on three key elements, namely: operating entities, a governance system and funding. To successfully accomplish the goals for policy reform, it is essential that multifunctional operating entities assist in the implementation of the strategic action plans. Operating entities vary among countries and are an extension of the prevailing socio-economic environment (Barnett, 2015). These entities tend to align with the basic infrastructure of the education system to ensure effective implementation of policy reforms to enhance human capital. In this regard, coordination across the entities and government institutions could be highly effective in allowing appropriate

allocation of responsibility and authority to each entity and institution associated with the programme (Gonzalez et al., 2008).

Further, it has been determined from the literature that governance also plays an instrumental role in the reform and advancement of the Saudi education sector. It could be very useful to provide a legal framework to support education for all by allocating the required resources to allow for universal enrolment in quality higher education. Also, to allow for addressing equality in education by facilitating optimum allocation of resources and providing access to quality higher education in remote and underdeveloped areas of KSA (Barnett, 2015).

The research findings have highlighted the loopholes in the role of the government in enhancing the effectiveness of the investment made for the education sector. In this regard, it is recommended that the involvement of the government will help in alleviating corruption in primary and higher education sectors, by allowing transparency and accountability in management and resource allocation. In addition, good governance will be helpful in increasing the participation of citizens in designing the education system and in the development of partnerships with the broader community. This can be achieved by government authorities through opening channels of communication between policy makers and society, thereby helping the education system to strengthen and accomplish its goals. This will also allow the parties and entities within the education system to maintain some level of autonomy in decision-making and management of funds while playing a central role in the socio-economic structure (Barnett, 2015). The governance could also adopt the decentralisation and empowerment model to improve the levels of higher education.

Furthermore, experimentation with new models, such as voucher systems and public-private partnerships, could be helpful in addressing some key issues in the Saudi education system. However, for effective performance delivery on the part of government bodies, public universities should be given greater flexibility in respect of decision making for internal governance, tuition fees, utilisation and allocation of budgets and funds, and key admission requirements (Barnett, 2015). This will help in deriving maximum benefit for the participants and providing maximum satisfaction to the stakeholders. Further, continued and increased support for the universities will be useful in fostering a higher sense of independence and self-ownership. This will help the stakeholders of the university, such as faculty, council members, alumni, students and members of the management, to become more accountable and responsible for the use of public funds (Gonzalez et al., 2008). In this regard, monitoring of the education system and the establishment of a quality assurance framework may significantly increase the effectiveness of the system.

Effective allocation of funds is essential to ensure appropriate delivery and sustainability of strategic reforms. Diversified sources of funding can help in obtaining continued income that can allow relative autonomy to institutions of higher education. In this regard, closed-budget funding may help in setting boundaries and promote the efficiency of the higher education system in KSA (Barnett, 2015). Alternatively, objective-based financing and competition-based funding can be helpful in increasing the potential accomplishment of objectives and encouraging relevance and quality in the end results. Public funds can provide major support for higher education. Subsidised loans can also be useful because they can cover major portions of the operating costs of higher education,

such as the tuition fees, leaving only a small part of expenses for the students themselves, such as books and housing. Student grants and vouchers can also be helpful for students in selecting appropriate universities (Barnett, 2015).

6.3.3 Investment in Education Infrastructure

The literature in the research along with the findings has revealed that in the efficacious implementation of policy reforms towards the improvement of human capital, infrastructure plays a crucial role. Four key factors can be recommended to make an essential contribution to the effectiveness and strength of an education infrastructure: teacher-oriented initiatives, an advanced curriculum, effective assessment and performance, and creation of a learning environment. In this regard, the teacher training can be addressed by encouraging foreign talent to enhance the value of human capital in KSA (Wiseman, Sadaawi and Alromi, 2008). Existing teachers can also be retained and retrained with advanced skills and new approaches to teaching and learning. Further, the resources available to teachers can also be enhanced to widen their knowledge and expertise. Further, the structure of the prevailing educational curriculum can be revised. It is recommended that the national curriculum reflects social, political and economic goals, and focuses on giving students a broader choice for vocational and academic training and learning, linked more closely to the nation's socioeconomic priorities, to encourage their participation in diverse societal activities (Gonzalez et al., 2008).

The implementation of education reforms and programmes requires continuous monitoring, accountability and measurement. It is recommended that the landscape of the Saudi education system is broadened by providing a wider range

of choices for students (Wiseman, Sadaawi and Alromi, 2008). Flexibility can be factored into education pathways by allowing educational institutions to offer integrated programmes that seek to recognise the talents and capabilities of the students at the primary as well as higher education level. Further, customisation of the curriculum can also be undertaken to increase flexibility for the students and improved methods for examination and assessment could be developed. In addition, initiatives could be recommended for improving the learning environment. In this context, parents can be engaged in the learning process, along with the local community stakeholders, to improve the learning environment (Wiseman, Sadaawi and Alromi, 2008).

6.3.4 Effective Implementation of the Education Reform Policy and Programmes

Examining the case studies of the education and human capital reforms undertaken in other countries such as Singapore and the US and considering their key success factors can be helpful in the successful implementation of educational reform policy and programmes in KSA (Nabli, 2007). In this regard, it can be recommended that projects be divided into sub-projects and that each sub-project can be provided with a specific scope, aim, ownership, work plan and expected targets. Further, the concurrent working and operations of a number of sub-projects should be carefully managed to avoid overburdening the administration of the higher education sector. The sequence of the implementation process can be prioritised according to the capabilities of the project management team and the urgency of reform. The higher the capacity of the management, the higher the probability that the reform will be accomplished

quickly. However, the reforms undertaken with comparatively less time pressure have a higher chance of success (Nabli, 2007). Therefore, the project aims have to be carefully evaluated before allocating time and prioritising them.

It can also be recommended that, in designing and implementing the reforms and policies, the government leadership must include the relevant stakeholders, more particularly the employees at different levels of the implementation process. Close collaboration is also helpful in ensuring the effectiveness of the contribution made by the reform. Continuous measurement of the results is essential to track the progress of the project initiatives and facilitate corrective actions within the programme.

6.3.5 Application of a Transformational Approach instead of Piecemeal Approach

It can also be recommended that a holistic, transformational approach be adopted so that greater synergies are accomplished which would not be possible through an incremental approach. This will also allow the use of various technological and economic development initiatives by facilitating systematic changes in the education system (Maroun et al., 2008). It also allows for breaking down large projects into smaller ones because they are easy to implement and require limited support or intervention. Such smaller projects will help in accomplishing the bigger targets of the reforms in a more effective manner (Maroun et al., 2008).

6.3.6 Policy Recommendations to Promote Innovation

The use of technology can be recommended to include and implement innovation in the reforms. Technology is evolving at a rapid rate and is an essential factor in any decisions about policies and reforms in the education system (Booz & Company, 2008). As there is a dearth of ICT professors to train and guide future generations in the educational uses of ICT, government investment in technology and the technical infrastructure would be highly useful for fulfilling the aims of the reforms and for promoting human capital in KSA. For this purpose, the government of KSA requires investment in ICT education in order to support teacher training, student knowledge and technological literacy in the country (Booz & Company, 2008).

6.3.7 Focus on Performance Improvement at All Levels

It is recommended that success at each stage must be measured on the basis of the completion of levels, increases in educational achievement and a reduction in gender and geographical gaps. In addition, the consolidating ministers and administrative bodies associated with the reforms should maintain a consensus among each other. Decentralisation can be another crucial means to improve the effectiveness of human capital reforms in KSA (Wang, 2014). In this regard, decentralisation should be allowed in decisions related to the language of instruction, allocation of resources in higher education institutions and university curriculum implementation. Further, it can also be recommended that the regulatory framework creates demand and supply incentives that allow sufficient autonomy for universities to operate as an independent institution. Regulations with tight control and supervision eliminate the autonomy of the key entities associated with the education system and restrict the effectiveness of the

reform. Therefore, flexibility in the system must be allowed to facilitate the effective implementation of the reforms to improve human capital (Wang, 2014).

6.3.8 Skill Enhancement Reforms

KSA needs to invest adequately in providing life-long learning opportunities to the Saudi workforce to enable them to adapt to the changing market dynamics. In this respect, it can be recommended that the organisations operating in KSA should focus on providing career advancement opportunities and access to training should be equally distributed amongst the youth and adult workforce. This will enable them to undertake future challenges in an effective manner. On-the-job training programmes should be developed in Saudi organisations, which will help in the growth and development of the Saudi workforce and will subsequently bring significant results for Saudi organisations (OECD, 2014).

It is very useful to encourage more activities for Saudi students of KASP in their university communities, such as the Saudi Student Conference, which has taken place every year. This is considered to be a chance for Saudi students to build and learn skills and exchange ideas and cultures with other international students.

6.3.9 Widening Opportunities and Freedom for Women

The government of KSA should make considerable efforts to open avenues for women to education and employment; there is currently a shortage of positions for women who wish to study and work in the field of engineering. In this regard, the education system of KSA should consider significant reforms and provide a platform for women to undertake their career in the area of engineering, which will allow them to utilise their capabilities and strengths. Additionally, as well as theoretical knowledge in the area of engineering, they should be allowed to gain

practical training in order to understand their subject fully. The Ministry of Education should focus on providing growth and learning opportunities in the field of engineering for women, which, in turn, will help to eliminate gender segregation issues.

The number of enrolled and graduate students in KASP and other higher education institutions in KSA show that Saudi women are talented and motivated. It is recommended that doors should be opened for women in the job market and that the dominance of guardian authority on women, regarding their career and education choices, should be reduced. Travelling is a major obstacle to women, as they have to have permission from a male guardian to travel and therefore it is sometimes illogic to give females a scholarship to study abroad when her male guardian has the power to stop her from travelling; this happened to some females under KASP. It is recommended that the government take into consideration the freedom and rights of women. In particular, the subject of women's segregation, which has begun to be discussed publicly, with younger generations increasingly aware of the problem and likely to call for more rights in the future. The Convention for Elimination of forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was signed by KSA and covers human rights, abuse of male guardianship and sex segregation. It is important to know that KSA is a signatory to this UN convention.

6.3.10 Giving Younger Generations the Opportunity to Share Ideas and Thoughts with Decision Makers

Bridging the generation gap between younger generations and decision makers would be a step towards development and progress. Since the technological and

open-space boom, young people in KSA are more educated and more aware of global changes than the older generations, as is the case with young people all over the world. When graduates of KASP went back to KSA, they faced a significant cultural and generation gap. The younger generation is more entrepreneurial and outward looking than the older generation. They feel they can make a difference and be innovative in their work, and find the public sector boring and limited. Young people in remote areas of KSA are eager for opportunities in jobs and education and are more engaged with their work than those in the cities. Women in KSA are eager for more freedom and more opportunities (Barnett, 2015). It is recommended to open a direct dialogue with the younger generations and build bridges between youth and decision makers in terms of reform and development of the education sector and labour market needs.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has undertaken a discussion about the overall research findings in order to generate overall final conclusions for the research. In this regard, the findings have revealed that students in KSA have a preference for studying overseas and attaining a better quality of education. The KASP has proved to be helpful in transferring students abroad for a better quality of education. It has also been determined that the students who studied abroad with the help of this scholarship programme gained time management, communication and team management development.

The findings of the research are also consistent with the findings of the literature analysis. In this regard, the literature supported the argument that 'the

government of KSA is taking significant efforts to enhance skilled labour to meet the needs of the job market'. The initiative by the government has helped students by encouraging them to enhance their theoretical and creative skills, which has improved their skill level for the job market. The literature has supported the findings that the KASP provides an extraordinary skill set that is difficult to find in KSA and that the scholarship programme is helpful for the growth and development of the students.

On the basis of the overall findings, some recommendations have been stated. The recommendations have highlighted the need to focus on the key success factors while planning for an effective education sector strategy, adoption of an education sector operating model, investment in education infrastructure, effective implementation of the education reform policy and programmes and focus on performance improvement at all levels. In addition to that, some recommendations have also been proposed for widening opportunities and freedom for women and to give younger generations the opportunity to share ideas and thoughts with decision makers. These recommendations can effectively guide the government of KSA to meet the economic policy goals of the country in a successful manner.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion of the Study

7.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study and the findings of the study, and concludes with suggestions for further studies and an overall conclusion of the chapter.

7.2 Brief Summary of the Chapters

This thesis started with an introduction that outlined the overarching research question of the study 'How has the government of KSA sought to invest in human capital through the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP), and to what extent has the programme been successful?'

The study then provided a background to the challenges facing KSA in the age of globalisation, particularly in terms of human capital development and investment, which forms the core of this study. The importance of focusing on the young Saudi generation was emphasised. The study then addressed the wave of Saudi government reforms in economic diversification. One of these reforms is the programme for workplace skills requirements and investment in human capital projects. The KASP – the case study of the thesis – is an important part of this reform agenda.

The literature review chapter examined human capital; it was necessary to provide an overview of the main claims in the area of human capital and introduce what is meant by the concept in terms of a broadly agreed definition. The chapter further noted the impacts that human capital is said to make in

terms of economic growth, performance and development, and how the literature claims that human capital outcomes can be measured.

Before introducing the case study, the historical and political context of the thesis was outlined. Details were provided regarding the current state of higher education, including the size of the sector, the nature of the curricula, the focus on religious studies and the humanities (rather than natural and physical sciences), the professional status of higher education qualifications and their value in the labour market. The chapter went on to consider why the higher education system fails to provide the skills required in the Saudi labour market and why the country depends on foreigners to fill highly skilled jobs. It then introduced the case study of KASP to identify the weaknesses of, and the differences between, particular reform strategies and to consider how Saudi educational reform is progressing.

The research methodology and data analysis chapter was important in order to discuss how to collect data, and how to analyse the formulated overarching research question and consider its validity. Furthermore, the research methodology chapter justified the methodologies used for analysing the collected data, which significantly contributed to the final findings. A questionnaire, focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data for the study. The following chapter analysed all the data and information collected from the fieldwork, and put them into perspective, with a view to demonstrating how adequate the programme is in responding to the demands of the labour market.

This chapter considered, What has worked? What has not, and why? What key challenges have been faced during the implementation of reforms? The chapter

concluded by discussing the findings and introducing the recommendations. Finally, the conclusion of the thesis summarises the whole study and gives suggestions for further studies, which the researcher believes is affecting human capital investment in KSA and the Arab world in general.

7.3 The Conclusion of the Study

On the basis of the data findings, it can be reasonably stated that KSA has been confronted with several challenges, due to over-dependence on the oil industry. In addition, the population of KSA is increasing at a fast pace, meaning that the government needs to make significant efforts to generate employment opportunities, which in turn will benefit economic growth and diversity. For this reason, the government of KSA plans to invest in certain human capital initiatives, which will broaden the horizons of the new generation by providing the required skills and training programmes. In this respect, the government authorities focused on bringing in certain reforms to the higher education system, which will affect economic growth. It has been noted that better educational reforms will produce qualified professionals who are able to attain better positions in the job market.

In terms of human capital investment, the Ministry of Education in KSA made significant attempts to transform educational policies so that they are in line with global standards. With the onset of globalisation and industrialisation, it became imperative for the Saudi government to initiate certain development programmes and implement reforms to the education sector, in order to instil the required skills and competencies among the youth of the nation. Producing a skilled workforce and human capital investment is the top concern of the Saudi

government. Therefore, the government has undertaken initiatives to prioritise the education system, which will bring about further developments in the country.

It is noted in the literature that there are several loopholes in the KSA education system, where there are no appropriate policies or infrastructures to meet the standards of the global job market. Some of the government's education policy, for instance, still emphasise the concept of memorisation. The findings of the interviews revealed that the Saudi education system relies on religious and literary teachings, which do not inculcate the right skills and competencies among the young. The prime aim should be to nurture the skills of the young generation, which will subsequently result in the socio-economic development of the population. Furthermore, the KSA education system exhibited intense shortcomings; government intervention will be required to incorporate certain changes that will have a direct influence on national productivity and the country's ability to meet global industry expectations.

Moreover, due to changing labour market conditions and the onset of globalisation, the Saudi education system needs to undergo a significant transformation in order to meet global market expectations. The findings generated from the interviews revealed that the government of KSA initiated a programme for Saudi students to study abroad, as they are more inclined towards attaining higher education from premier institutes in developed countries, such as the UK (see Appendix 1). It was identified that Saudi students lack technical expertise and other competencies, which are required in the global business environment. In order to stay consistent with current global trends, it is

imperative for the government of KSA to take countermeasures to fulfil the requirements of work markets.

It has also been revealed that in the fiercely competitive business arena, job market expectations across the globe are changing according to market dynamics. The analysis showed that Saudi students lag behind in terms of requisite skills and competencies and that the government needs to make sufficient investment to develop and grow their human capital. Saudi students face difficulties in acquiring jobs in their home country, which has a direct impact on the economic growth of the population. In order to eliminate growing discrepancies in the higher education system of KSA, the government devised certain strategies to prepare Saudi human resources in an effective manner, so that they can enter into different areas of the labour market, and bring good economic returns to the country.

As part of these efforts, KASP was established in 2005 and Saudi students were provided with governmental scholarships to attain higher education degrees from leading institutions in developed countries, such as the UK and the USA. Saudi students, both male and female, enrolled in the scholarship programme to help them enhance their personal characteristics and to instil them with the skills and competencies required to succeed in the workplace. This process can help the young to attain better jobs back in KSA. Despite clear limitations in the Saudi education sector, the government is constantly developing and implementing measures to help in delivering a qualified and informed workforce.

Interviews took place with students enrolled in, as well as graduated from, the scholarship programme, so as to reveal its impact on the skills of Saudi students.

From the perspective of the students involved, by acquiring a higher education degree from developed countries, they gained potential skills and diversified their knowledge base to a significant extent. Furthermore, Saudi students are making the shift towards attaining degrees from other developed countries, as they want to achieve a prominent position in the job market. It has also been asserted that if the government of KSA supports human capital investment, it will be better able to diversify the economy in different areas and bring better job prospects for the youth of the country.

A significant shift towards attaining higher education degrees from abroad was considered to be due to the fact that the Saudi education system is not aligned with the international educational standards that are prevalent in other developed countries. Thus, Saudi students aspire to explore the opportunities that are established in the global market. Moreover, the KSA market is highly attractive and there exists immense market potential, which has led various international business enterprises to diversify their business in KSA. However, due to the unavailability of opportunities to acquire the requisite skills and competencies within KSA, the nation's youth are more inclined to gain education from developed nations that also provide them with various psychological benefits. The findings reveal that students attain substantial advantages after they enrol in scholarship programmes, which in turn results in improved employment and better career outcomes.

It was further noted that the foreign universities provide the students with direct insights from external industries and do not rely only on theory, which provides new and fresh comprehension among the youth of KSA. In the same vein, along

with the practical experience gained, a proper infrastructure is also provided for sustained educational development. The government authorities are providing adequate funds for students to be educated at leading foreign institutions to develop the required skill sets so that they can capitalise on the existing market opportunities. At the same time, companies operating in KSA will also significantly benefit, as they acquire a skilled Saudi workforce, rather than relying on foreign expatriates.

The findings reveal that job market expectations were relatively high among KASP graduates. Therefore, after graduating from foreign universities, they were able to exploit some of the job opportunities back in KSA. It was further revealed that some students were able to nurture entrepreneurial skills after they graduated from foreign universities, which in turn generates employment opportunities and will help in the diversification of the nation's economy. Due to increased industry exposure and achieving a practical insight into the market, students can view the wider perspective, which encourages them to set up new enterprises. Thus, it can be inferred that this initiative has proved to be significantly beneficial in developing new and innovative skills among those who participated in the programme. After graduating from KASP, students are able to recognise their core strengths and internal capabilities, which help them to stay consistent with growing industry trends.

It was also highlighted by the focus groups that, due to interventions made by the Saudi government, females are now also able to benefit from various opportunities, which enable them to secure better job positions in the public sector. The youth of KSA are able to acquire noteworthy positions in the public

and private sector. In addition, female respondents revealed that the scholarship programme brought significant benefits by enabling them to inculcate new skills and capabilities through different majors, which made them equally competent as part of a global labour workforce. However, KSA is a conservative country that restricts women from entering certain job fields, such as engineering, and so there was limited access to education in these areas because of the lack of relevant job opportunities in KSA. Despite this, significant reforms in the education sector mean that students see Saudi women as being equivalent to men in terms of education and job opportunities.

It was highlighted that the scholarship programme enabled Saudi students to develop essential skills and diversify their knowledge base, but it is also important for them to attain work experience, which provides them with practical insights into the market. In addition, the analysis shows that the Saudi students lagged behind in terms of technical expertise and did not possess good interpersonal and communication skills, which are a pre-requisite for the corporate sector. Consequently, the scholarship programme catered to this need with essential training and development activities in these areas. For this reason, Saudi students were effectively trained while studying abroad to incorporate the latest techniques in communication, supported by knowledge regarding the ethics and etiquettes to be observed while communicating for business purposes.

Furthermore, noticeable changes were identified as the result of this programme and it was revealed that Saudi women faced no significant gender discrimination issues in terms of education opportunities. Although the government is making efforts towards equality, Saudi society still does not accept that women can work

in certain positions such as in engineering or the military for example, or even in aviation. KASP provided immense opportunities for women to gain access to education in leading universities abroad. However, Saudi women were still confronted with some difficulties while entering the scholarship programme, as there was no authority to guide and assist them in applying.

Moreover, most women also had to face the issue of Mahram while acquiring higher education. A Saudi female student has to receive approval of her Mahram (guardian) before applying for a scholarship; otherwise, she will not be accepted in KASP because it involves travelling abroad on her own. Most female students find this a contradiction, since the government gives opportunities for women while society finds it difficult to accept women travelling alone and women being independent. As part of the study, the issues of women's equality and independence were brought forward, to focus on the generation gap between the policy makers and the new generation. The study also examined the gap between traditional Saudi customs and traditions and attitudes of the new generation who are open to other cultures even before KASP, since they have access to networks and technology. Also, as mentioned above, certain specialisations, such as engineering, were not considered suitable for women. Overall, this programme helped to eliminate some gender segregation issues and brought significant changes to the overall development of Saudi society, but difficulties still remain for women's freedom and rights, as culture, society and male authority control them. On the other hand, the government holds the ability to force a balance in educational and economic reform, and assist in changing the perspectives of society.

On another note, it was revealed from the analysis of the interviews that, with the help of scholarship programmes, students are provided with ample opportunities to enable them to develop organisational and managerial skills. KASP was able to identify the knowledge gap that existed between international students and Saudi students, and to develop specific training programmes in order to resolve the discrepancies. Saudi students require specific training in certain areas that are essential for them to attain significant job positions in the corporate sector.

Various training and competency development programmes were developed under KASP, which expanded the knowledge base of the Saudi students to a profound extent. Through these training programmes, they were able to adapt to changing market dynamics and were made aware of different cultures and ethnicities. In addition, KASP helped Saudi students become acquainted with the latest technological developments and utilise their innovative capability, which will bring substantial economic returns for KSA. The literature review revealed support for the idea that, through the promotion of a knowledge-based economy, KSA will be able to maintain a competitive position in industry by producing a competent workforce.

The cultural barrier has also been eliminated, which has provided Saudi women with increased employment opportunities. Moreover, this programme allowed female students to gain knowledge and different skills through various workshops, seminars and exercises, which widened their knowledge base to a significant extent, although they continue to face difficulties with male authority and societal control.

KASP has initiated several shifts within KSA that have proved to be highly beneficial for the country in attaining a competitive position in the international market. Significant opportunities were provided to Saudi students to interact with people from other backgrounds and ethnicities, which have enabled them to embrace and accommodate different cultures. Saudi students were more able to seek employment in various public and private sector enterprises, which has improved the overall economic conditions of the nation. Moreover, by sponsoring Saudi students to gain education from the universities of the USA and the UK, crucial professional skills have been inculcated among the students, such as a goal-focused attitude, commitment and responsibility.

Thus, it can be concluded that the scholarship programme has proved to be highly beneficial for the economic reform and social development of KSA, as it has helped to diversify the economy and fostered the growth of entrepreneurial initiatives. This thesis sought to test the strength of that claim with the following overarching research question: 'How has the government of KSA sought to invest in human capital through the KASP, and to what extent has the programme been successful?'

It can be stated that with regard to the overarching research question, it has been concluded that reforms and investments in human capital development undertaken by the government of KSA have been significantly beneficial for the development of learning skills which will lead to economic reform and social progress of the country.

Strategic reforms undertaken by the Saudi government have proved to be highly significant, as they have transformed society and fostered the development of the

young, which will have a direct influence on the economic growth of KSA. However, although the programme has succeeded to the extent of adequately preparing young men and women for the labour market, the impact of a conservative society and culture, particularly in regard to women's issues and bureaucracy in regulations and procedures, needs to be further considered and developed.

7.4 Suggestions for further studies

Domestic problems in the areas of human rights, gender equality and extremist dominance have to be addressed to attain further strength in human capital investment in KSA.

One of the major challenges that requires further exploration and analysis is the impact, especially on younger generations, of the threats that KSA faces domestically and regionally from non-state terrorist groups and extremist entities either through education or the media, as these have a bearing upon the nation's ambition to develop and be more open to change and reform. This aspect requires in-depth analysis and more questions will have to be asked to take into account the insights generated for research in the future.

The brain drain issue, among scholarship students in recent years, especially among females is significant. A number prefer to stay abroad in a developed country for few years for work experience. This issue of gender and women empowerment must be taken into consideration in further studies of governmental investment strategies and plans for human capital investment.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter summarised the overall conclusions derived from the findings and discussion undertaken in the research. In this regard, the summaries of each chapter have been discussed along with the conclusion of the study and suggestions for further studies. The research has been undertaken in seven chapters in addition to an introduction, which is an overview of the study. The introduction highlighted the key problem statement of the research and stated the research overarching research question: 'How has the government of KSA sought to invest in human capital through the KASP, and to what extent has the programme been successful?'

The first chapter of the research provided a detailed background of the challenges encountered by KSA in the age of globalisation, in the domains of development and investment in human capital. The concept and role of human capital in the growth, performance and development of the economy, with specific discussion about KSA was undertaken in the literature review chapter in the research. For a detailed examination of the effectiveness of the initiatives undertaken by the government of KSA for the development of human capital, the case of the scholarship programme namely, the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP) was undertaken in the third chapter.

The case study helped in identifying the key shortcomings and helped in highlighting the key differences between the key reform strategies and the ways in which the educational reforms for human capital development in KSA are progressing. The research further made use of triangulation, survey, focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews for effective data collection. The

major methods used in the research and the underlying logics for the application of each method was discussed in the methodology chapter, while a thorough examination and analysis of the findings obtained through the methods of data collection were made in the following chapter.

On the basis of the findings, discussion and conclusion in the research, it has been determined that KSA has been encountering numerous challenges because of overdependence on oil to run the economy. On the other hand, the rapid growth in the population has been exerting additional pressure on the country, together with the women's issues of equality and rights as half of the population. In the midst of these major economic challenges, the primary task undertaken by the government of KSA has been to invest in human capital development to generate employment opportunities for the growth and diversification of the economy. In this regard, the focus has been to promote skills development and training through educational reforms, which helps the country in triggering the growth of the economy in the wave of globalisation and industrialisation. However, the examination of the literature has revealed numerous shortcomings in the education system of the country; as a result it fails to meet the standards of the global job market. For this purpose, the government of KSA implemented a scholarship programme to develop skills and competencies to take advantage of the global job market.

Nevertheless, from the findings of the research some relevant problems have also been identified with the fundamental philosophy behind the scholarship programme. This includes limiting the scholarship programme to a small set of medical and technical students. Although the country requires doctors and

engineers for economic growth, there is also an equally essential need for philosophers, sociologists, artists, linguistics and designers. In addition to that, it also became clear that the students returning from the Western countries after pursuing higher degrees encounter serious difficulties in re-adjusting with the Saudi lifestyle (Albeity, 2014). Further, some students also encounter major issues in respect of unemployment, despite the qualification from a recognised and renowned institute, which is a key issue leading to disappointment and discouragement. Female students, who adapted to the liberal society of the Western countries, also face difficulties in re-adjusting themselves with the conservative nature of Saudi society (Albeity, 2014). The issues indicate the relevant and practical problems associated with the nature of the scholarship programme. In addition to that is the brain drain issue, among scholarship students especially for some females, who prefer to stay abroad for a few years, in a developed country because of the freedom and equality in the Western lifestyle. The Saudi students, especially females, also show enthusiasm and a motivation to learn in spite of all the obstacles and barriers they face, in terms of bureaucracy and inflexible regulations of the Cultural Bureau. In particular, the female students find the issue of Mahram unacceptable, since it becomes a barrier for their education, future independence and equality.

However, the findings of the research emphasise that the students of KSA have acquired substantial advantages in the form of improved career development and employment opportunities. In this regard, it has also been showed that a proper infrastructure is also provided for sustained educational development for Saudi students. The examination of the findings also revealed that the scholarship programme enabled Saudi students to develop essential skills and diversify their

knowledge base, but it is also important for them to attain work experience, which provides them with practical insights into the market. The findings also revealed that through the scholarship programme, students are provided with ample opportunities to enable them to develop organisational and managerial skills. It helped Saudi students to become acquainted with the latest technological developments and utilise their innovative capability, which will bring substantial economic returns for KSA.

It also helped in removing cultural barriers and provided exposure for the female students to exploit employment opportunities and equality. Thus, on the basis of the research findings and the analysis undertaken henceforth, it can be concluded that the scholarship programme has proved to be highly beneficial for the economic and social development of KSA. It has diversified the economy and fostered the growth of entrepreneurial initiatives. Therefore, it can be stated with regard to the overarching question of the research that reforms and investments in human capital development undertaken by the government of KSA have been significantly beneficial for the students and social progress of the country, but not for the economic reform. In this regards, it is important to highlight the fact that the Saudi Arabian government has realised recently the significance of human capital investment and has pursued an effective and useful means of undertaking its development to achieve the economic goals of the country.

In this respect, it can also been concluded that this research is effectively aligned with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. One of the three central themes of Vision 2030 is to emphasise the goals of developing a thriving economy by facilitating a robust and effective education system that is aligned with the needs of the market and

allows the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities to the small, as well as large corporations. For this purpose, it has highlighted the use of investment in human capital to unlock the promises of the economic sectors and diversify the economy (Al Arabiya English, 2016). This indicates that this research, which has been conducted to explore the effectiveness of the initiatives undertaken by the government of KSA in human capital investments, is in alignment with the Vision 2030 of the country.

With regard to future study on the subject of human capital development in KSA, the impact of terrorism and extremism activities need to be examined to evaluate their role in hindering the growth and prosperity of the country. Furthermore, women's empowerment and equality need to be focused on and developed to support the governmental initiatives and strategies for human capital investment and economic reform and to help the 'Vision 2030' to succeed.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP)

Kingdom Of KSA Ministry of Higher Education KSA Cultural Mission

King Abdullah Scholarships Program (KASP)

Introduction

Knowledge is the foundation of the renaissance of nations; for this reason, the government of the Kingdom of KSA has given special attention to this sector. Because of his concern for sustainable development of human resources in the Kingdom, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud launched his initiative to create the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. The program is designed to be an important source of support for Saudi universities as well as the public and private sectors in the kingdom by supplying them with highly qualified Saudi citizens and through the development, preparation and qualification of human resources in an effective manner, so that they may compete on an international level in the labour market and the various fields of scientific research. To achieve these aims, King Abdullah issued a royal decree on 17/4/1426H (25/5/2005) launching this program, which continued for a period of five years.

The program began by sending a group of male and female students to study in the United States of America. Its scope was then broadened to include a number of advanced countries in diverse fields of specialization in order to meet the needs of the labour market in the Kingdom of KSA.

After the completion of the first five stages of the program, and the Ministry's conviction that it had realized its goals, the Ministry requested King Abdullah to renew it for a further five-year period, beginning in 1431H (2010). The King graciously approved this request on 4/3/1431H (18/2/2010), a decision which would enable more young Saudi men and women to realize their ambitions and aspirations, and at the same time supply the government and private sectors with highly qualified individuals.

The administration in charge of the program carries out evaluations of all it stages and benefits from feedback received in improving and developing the performance of each stage qualitatively and quantitatively.

Vision

To prepare distinguished generations for a knowledge society built upon a knowledge-based economy.

Mission

To prepare and qualify Saudi human resources in an effective manner so that they will be able to compete on an international level in the labor market and the different areas of scientific research, and thereby become an important source of supply of highly qualified individuals for Saudi universities as well as the government and private sectors.

Goals

- Sponsor qualified Saudis for study in the best universities around the world
- Work to bring about a high level of academic and professional standards through the foreign   scholarship program
- Exchange scientific, educational and cultural experience with countries worldwide
- Build up qualified and professional Saudi staff in the work environment   · Raise and develop the level of professionalism among Saudis

Study Levels and Academic Disciplines

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program provides opportunities for Saudi citizens to pursue their undergraduate and graduate university education abroad in many academic disciplines needed by most government and private sectors. On the undergraduate (Bachelor's degree) level, students are allowed to study medicine, medical sciences, and health sciences. On the graduate level (Master's degree and

Ph.D.), the program allows students to study a diversity of fields, including:

- Medicine, dentistry, and the medical fellowship
- Pharmacy
- Nursing

- Medical sciences: radiology, medical laboratories, medical technology, and physical therapy
- Engineering: civil, architectural, electric, mechanical, industrial, chemical, environmental and communications engineering, as well as heavy equipment and machinery
- Computing : computer engineering , computer science, networks, etc.
- Science: mathematics, physics, chemistry, biolog y
- Other disciplines: law, accounting , E-commerce, finance, insurance and marketing

Countries of Study

The countries to which students are sent to study in the program have been selected on the basis of the excellence of their educational programs and are subject to periodic review. Students accepted in the program are currently sent to the following countries:

- United States of America • Canada   • United Kingdom   • Ireland
- France   • Spain   • Italy   • Australia   • Germany   • The Netherlands • Poland
- New Zealand   • Austria   • Hungary   • Czech Republic • Singapore
- South Korea   • Japan   • People's Republic of China • Malaysia   • India   • South Africa

Stipends and Benefits

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program offers generous support for scholarship recipients, as follows:

- A monthly stipend   • All educational tuition fees are paid in full   • Expenses incurred by the student to attend conferences, symposiums and workshops are paid in full • Study-related travel expenses are reimbursed   • Air tickets   • Cash allowance for books and clothing   • Bonuses for outstanding academic performances

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

http://ueaphd.weebly.com

University of East Anglia

School of Politics, Philosophy,

Languages and Communication Studies

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

This survey is part of a PhD research on the King Abdullah Scholarship

Programme (KASP), which has been identified as an investment in Human

Capital. The programme aims to meet the needs of the Saudi labour market
through an extensive programme of learning knowledge and skills to prepare the
next generation of Saudi youth and entrepreneurs to reform the economy.

It should take only 10 minutes, and it will be completely anonymous.

Your answers are very important to this study.

You may watch the following video before answering the questions.

The following survey is to be answered by Saudi students with experience of King
Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP).

The survey can also be found on page 2 of this website

Thank you

This research is conducted by:

**M. Al Yousef, a PhD researcher at the University of East Anglia (UEA)
Norwich**

U.K.

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Appendix 2.1 Survey

The following survey is to be answered by the Saudi students with experience of King Abdullah Scholarship Programme.

* Required

Q1. Age *

○ 18-24

○ 25-30

○ 31-40

○ 41+

Q2. Gender *

○ Male

○ Female

Q4. How long have you been studying abroad? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	More

Q3. Which kinds of the following courses have you done or currently doing as part of your scholarship programme? *

You may choose more than one choice if you have completed more than one level of study in your scholarship

☐ English language course

☐ Foundation year/ Pre-Sessional course

☐ BA/BSs

☐ MA/MSc/MBA

☐ PhD/MPhil

☐ Training course

☐ Other: [   ]

Q5. Studying abroad gave me the chance to achieve the following skills:

go to Q 5.1 *

You can use the following space to add skills that are not included in 5.1-5.10

[   ]

5.1 To be more organised with time and work *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

5.2 Take responsibility in difficult situations *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

5.3 More flexible and adaptable when working in a team *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

5.4 More aware of IT /Networking/ Electronic communications (Emails)/ social media *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

5.5 Improve negotiation and presentation skills *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

5.6 Set a plan for different tasks *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

5.7 Aware of Etiquette / dress code in workplace and formal events *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

5.8 Adopt change / be more open minded *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

5.9 Create ideas / develop ideas *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

5.10 Listening and speaking techniques (listen carefully to the speaker/ not to interrupt/ ask questions in appropriate time etc.) *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

Q6. Which employment sector is most attractive for you? *

○ a) Governmental

○ b) Private

○ c) Start my own businessThis is a required question

Q7. Which of the followings have you considered as an obstacle during your scholarship period? *

You may choose more than one answer

335

☐ Get along with campus life

☐ Open up to different cultures

☐ Lack of skills in communications

☐ Studying in a foreign language

☐ Using IT/ Networking/ social media in communications

☐ Able to accept change

☐ Working in a team

☐ None of the above

☐ Presentation skills including speaking in front of audience

☐ Other: [   ] This is a required question

Q8. Females are given equal opportunities in the area of study and job *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

Q9. Proper training courses and learning skills were provided by the Saudi Cultural Bureau, as part of the scholarship programme *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

Q10. Living abroad has given me the chance to learn about other cultures by: *

You may choose more than one answer

☐ Communicating with my neighbours

☐ Following the local media (newspaper, TV programmes, radio etc.)

☐ Communicate/ build a good relationship with students of different cultures

☐ Spend leisure time with other people of various cultures

☐ Understand the Nation culture and heritage

☐ Attending events and activities at the campus

☐ Respect the values of other cultural Holy days and Celebrations

☐ None of the above

☐ Other: [_____] This is a required question

Q11 Do you understand what 'soft skills' means in the work environment? *

○ Yes

○ NoThis is a required question

Q12 Aware of new skills that is required to my future career? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

Q13 The role of the Saudi Cultural Bureau is very effective and supportive *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strongly agree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree

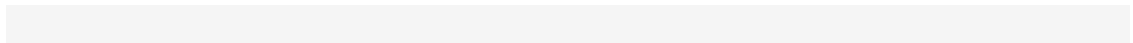Would you like to add a comment?

[text box]

If you would like to be contacted by the researcher please add your email address (Optional)

[ ]

Thank you for your answers, now finish the questionnaire with pressing the submit button

You may add the date

| Month ▼ | Day ▼ | 2016 ▼ |

100%: You made it.

Submit

Appendix 3: Full Text of the Saudi Vision 2030

The Saudi cabinet has endorsed a sweeping set of programs and reforms to be implemented by 2030. (Photo: Saudi Vision 2030)

The Council of Ministers endorsed during its session on Monday under the chairmanship of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

The Cabinet session was devoted to discuss the vision, which was drafted by the Council of Economic and Development Affairs upon instructions of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. Following is the text of Saudi Arabia's vision 2030:

Foreword

It is my pleasure to present Saudi Arabia's vision for the future. It is an ambitious yet achievable blueprint, which expresses our long-term goals and expectations and reflects our country's strengths and capabilities.

All success stories start with a vision, and successful visions are based on strong pillars. The first pillar of our vision is our status as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds. We recognize that Allah the Almighty has bestowed on our land a gift more precious than oil. Our Kingdom is the Land of the Two Holy Mosques, the most sacred sites on earth, and the direction of the Kaaba (Qibla) to which more than a billion Muslims turn at prayer.

The second pillar of our vision is our determination to become a global investment powerhouse. Our nation holds strong investment capabilities, which we will harness to stimulate our economy and diversify our revenues.

The third pillar is transforming our unique strategic location into a global hub connecting three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa. Our geographic position between key global waterways, makes the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia an epicenter of trade and the gateway to the world.

Our country is rich in its natural resources. We are not dependent solely on oil for our energy needs. Gold, phosphate, uranium, and many other valuable minerals are found beneath our land. But our real wealth lies in the ambition of our people

and the potential of our younger generation. They are our nation's pride and the architects of our future. We will never forget how, under tougher circumstances than today, our nation was forged by collective determination when the late King Abdulaziz Al-Saud — may Allah bless his soul — united the Kingdom. Our people will amaze the world again.

We are confident about the Kingdom's future. With all the blessings Allah has bestowed on our nation, we cannot help but be optimistic about the decades ahead. We ponder what lies over the horizon rather than worrying about what could be lost.

The future of the Kingdom, my dear brothers and sisters, is one of huge promise and great potential, God willing. Our precious country deserves the best. Therefore, we will expand and further develop our talents and capacity. We will do our utmost to ensure that Muslims from around the world can visit the Holy Sites. We are determined to reinforce and diversify the capabilities of our economy, turning our key strengths into enabling tools for a fully diversified future. As such, we will transform Aramco from an oil producing company into a global industrial conglomerate.

We will transform the Public Investment Fund into the world's largest sovereign wealth fund. We will encourage our major corporations to expand across borders and take their rightful place in global markets. As we continue to give our army the best possible machinery and equipment, we plan to manufacture half of our military needs within the Kingdom to create more job opportunities for citizens and keep more resources in our country.

We will expand the variety of digital services to reduce delays and cut tedious bureaucracy. We will immediately adopt wide-ranging transparency and accountability reforms and, through the body set up to measure the performance of government agencies, hold them accountable for any shortcomings. We will be transparent and open about our failures as well as our successes, and will welcome ideas on how to improve. All this comes from the directive of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman, may Allah protect him, who ordered us to plan for a future that fulfills your ambitions and your aspirations.

In line with his instructions, we will work tirelessly from today to build a better tomorrow for you, your children, and your children's children. Our ambition is for the long term. It goes beyond replenishing sources of income that have weakened or preserving what we have already achieved. We are determined to build a thriving country in which all citizens can fulfill their dreams, hopes and ambitions. Therefore, we will not rest until our nation is a leader in providing opportunities for all through education and training, and high quality services such as employment initiatives, health, housing, and entertainment.

We commit ourselves to providing world-class government services, which effectively and efficiently meet the needs of our citizens. Together we will continue building a better country, fulfilling our dream of prosperity and unlocking the talent, potential, and dedication of our young men and women. We will not allow our country ever to be at the mercy of a commodity price volatility or external markets.

We have all the means to achieve our dreams and ambitions. There are no excuses for us to stand still or move backwards. Our vision is a strong, thriving, and stable Saudi Arabia that provides opportunity for all. Our vision is a tolerant country with Islam as its constitution and moderation as its method. We will welcome qualified individuals from all over the world and will respect those who have come to join our journey and our success.

We intend to provide better opportunities for partnerships with the private sector through the three pillars: Our position as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, our leading investment capabilities, and our strategic geographical position. We will improve the business environment, so that our economy grows and flourishes, driving healthier employment opportunities for citizens and long-term prosperity for all. This promise is built on cooperation and on mutual responsibility.

This is our 'Saudi Arabia's Vision for 2030.' We will begin immediately delivering the overarching plans and programs we have set out. Together, with the help of Allah, we can strengthen the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's position as a great nation in which we should all feel an immense pride.

Muhammad Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud Chairman of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs

Our Vision

'Saudi Arabia: the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, the investment powerhouse, and the hub connecting three continents' Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is blessed with many rich assets. Our geographic, cultural, social, demographic and economic advantages have enabled us to take a leading position in the world. To build the best future for our country, we have based our vision for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on three pillars that represent our unique competitive advantages. Our status will enable us to build on our leading role as the heart of Arab and Islamic worlds. At the same time, we will use our investment power to create a more diverse and sustainable economy. Finally, we will use our strategic location to build our role as an integral driver of international trade and to connect three continents: Africa, Asia and Europe.

Our vision is built around three themes: A vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation. This first theme is vital to achieving the vision and a strong foundation for economic prosperity. We believe in the importance of a vibrant society. Members of this society live in accordance with the Islamic principle of moderation, are proud of their national identity and their ancient cultural heritage, enjoy a good life in a beautiful environment, are protected by caring families and are supported by an empowering social and health care system.

In the second theme, a thriving economy provides opportunities for all by building an education system aligned with market needs and creating economic opportunities for the entrepreneur, the small enterprise as well as the large corporation. Therefore, we will develop our investment tools to unlock our promising economic sectors, diversify our economy and create job opportunities.

We will also grow our economy and improve the quality of our services, by privatizing some government services, improving the business environment, attracting the finest talent and the best investments globally, and leveraging our unique strategic location in connecting three continents.

Our nation is ambitious in what we want to achieve. We will apply efficiency and responsibility at all levels.

Our third theme is built on an effective, transparent, accountable, enabling and high-performing government. We will also prepare the right environment for our citizens, the private sector and non-profit sector to take their responsibilities and take the initiative in facing challenges and seizing opportunities. In each of these themes, we highlighted a selection of commitments and goals, as a reflection of our ambition and a representation of what we aim to achieve. This vision will be the point of reference for our future decisions, so that all future projects are aligned to its content. To clarify our next steps, we have already prepared the ground and launched some executive programs at the Council of Economic and Development Affairs. We will now launch a first portfolio of crucial programs with the aim to achieve our goals and honor our commitments. Sustainable success can only be achieved when built upon solid foundations. Our vision, grounded in our country's strengths, will deliver this stability and create a brighter future for our country and our people.

1. A Vibrant Society

1.1 A vibrant society. With strong roots We have enormous untapped opportunities and a rich blend of natural resources, but our real wealth lies in our people and our society. We take pride in what makes our nation exceptional: our Islamic faith and our national unity. Our nation is the core of the Arab and Islamic worlds and represents the heart of Islam. We are confident that, God willing, we will build a brighter future, one based on the bedrock of Islamic principles. We will continue to excel in performing our duties towards pilgrims to the fullest and promote our deep-rooted national identity.

1.1.1 Living by Islamic values. Islam and its teachings are our way of life. They are the basis of all our laws, decisions, actions and goals. Following Islam's guidance on the values of hard-work, dedication, and excellence, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), said: 'That Allah loves us to master our work'. Therefore, the principles of Islam will be the driving force for us to realize our vision. The values of moderation, tolerance, excellence, discipline, equity, and transparency will be the bedrock of our success.

1.1.2 Focusing our efforts to serve Umrah visitors. Saudi Arabia has assumed a prominent place in the world and has become synonymous with hospitality and a warm welcome to all Muslims. As such, it has carved a special place in the hearts of pilgrims and the faithful everywhere. We have been given the privilege to serve the Two Holy Mosques, the pilgrims and all visitors to the blessed holy sites. In the last decade, the number of Umrah visitors entering the country from abroad has tripled, reaching eight million people. This is a noble responsibility. It requires us to spare no effort in seeking to offer pilgrims with all they need so we fulfill our duty to provide good hospitality to our brothers and sisters. In this

context, we have recently begun a third expansion of the Two Holy Mosques as well as modernizing and increasing the capacities of our airports. We have launched the Makkah Metro project to complement the railroad and train projects that will serve visitors to the Holy Mosques and holy sites. We have reinforced the network of our transport system to facilitate access and help pilgrims perform their visits with greater ease and convenience. At the same time, we will enrich pilgrims' spiritual journeys and cultural experiences while in the Kingdom. We will establish more museums, prepare new tourist and historical sites and cultural venues, and improve the pilgrimage experience within the Kingdom.

 1.1.3 Taking pride in our national identity. We take immense pride in the historical and cultural legacy of our Saudi, Arab, and Islamic heritage. Our land was, and continues to be, known for its ancient civilizations and trade routes at the crossroads of global trade. This heritage has given our society the cultural richness and diversity it is known for today. We recognize the importance of preserving this sophisticated heritage in order to promote national unity and consolidate true Islamic and Arab values. We will endeavor to strengthen, preserve and highlight our national identity so that it can guide the lives of future generations. We will do so by keeping true to our national values and principles, as well as by encouraging social development and upholding the Arabic language. We will continue to work on the restoration of national, Arab, Islamic and ancient cultural sites and strive to have them registered internationally to make them accessible to everyone and, in the process, create cultural events and build world-class museums which will attract visitors from near and far. This will create a living witness to our ancient heritage, showcasing our prominent place in history and on the map of civilizations.

Among our commitments: The honor to serve the increasing number of Umrah visitors in the best way possible

We are honored to attend to pilgrims and Umrah visitors' needs, fulfilling a role bestowed on us by Allah. Our expansion of the Two Holy Mosques has led to a tripling in the number of foreign Umrah visitors over the last decade, reaching eight million in 2015. By increasing the capacity and by improving the quality of the services offered to Umrah visitors, we will, by 2020, make it possible for over 15 million Muslims per year to perform Umrah and be completely satisfied with their pilgrimage experience. We will achieve this by improving visa application procedures which will smooth the visa process with the aim of full automation. We will also further integrate e-services into the pilgrims' journey, which will enrich the religious and cultural experience. Both the public and private sectors will play a crucial role in this project as we work to upgrade accommodation, improve hospitality and launch new services for pilgrims.

Among our commitments: The largest Islamic museum

We have always taken — and will continue to take — great pride in our heritage. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the last of prophets, was from Makkah, the birthplace of Islam. Madinah is where the first Islamic society was born. We will build an Islamic museum in accordance with the highest global standards, equipped with the latest methods in collection, preservation, presentation and

documentation. It will be a major landmark for our citizens and visitors, where they will learn about the history of Islam, enjoy interactive experiences and participate in cultural events. Using modern technology, visitors to the museum will take an immersive journey through the different ages of Islamic civilization, as well as its science, scholars and culture. It will also be an international hub for erudition and include a world-class library and research center.

Among our goals by 2030

To increase our capacity to welcome Umrah visitors from 8 million to 30 million every year. To more than double the number of Saudi heritage sites registered with UNESCO.

1.2 -A vibrant society with fulfilling lives

The happiness and fulfillment of citizens and residents is important to us. This can only be achieved through promoting physical, psychological and social well-being. At the heart of our vision is a society in which all enjoy a good quality of life, a healthy lifestyle and an attractive living environment.

1.2.1 Promoting culture and entertainment

We consider culture and entertainment indispensable to our quality of life. We are well aware that the cultural and entertainment opportunities currently available do not reflect the rising aspirations of our citizens and residents, nor are they in harmony with our prosperous economy. It is why we will support the efforts of regions, governorates, non-profit and private sectors to organize cultural events. We intend to enhance the role of government funds, while also attracting local and international investors, creating partnerships with international entertainment corporations. Land suitable for cultural and entertainment projects will be provided and talented writers, authors and directors will be carefully supported. We will seek to offer a variety of cultural venues — such as libraries, arts and museums — as well as entertainment possibilities to suit tastes and preferences. These projects will also contribute to our economy and will result in the creation of many job opportunities.

1.2.2 Living healthy, being healthy.

A healthy and balanced lifestyle is an essential mainstay of a high quality of life. Yet opportunities for the regular practice of sports have often been limited. This will change. We intend to encourage widespread and regular participation in sports and athletic activities, working in partnership with the private sector to establish additional dedicated facilities and programs. This will enable citizens and residents to engage in a wide variety of sports and leisure pursuits. We aspire to excel in sport and be among the leaders in selected sports regionally and globally.

1.2.3 Developing our cities

Our cities already enjoy high levels of security and development. Despite the current turmoil in the region and the wide expanse of our territories, our country

and citizens are safe and secure. Our cities are among the safest in the world with annual crime rates that are less than 0.8 per 100,000 people, far below the international rate of 7.6. We will maintain our safety and security by supporting ongoing efforts to fight drugs abuse, as well as by adopting further measures to ensure traffic safety, reduce traffic accidents and minimize their tragic consequences. Our cities have grown significantly in recent decades; a growth which has been accompanied by the steady development of their infrastructure. To ensure we can continue to enhance the quality of life for all and meet the needs and requirements of our citizens, we will continue to ensure high quality services such as water, electricity, public transport and roads are properly provided. Open and landscaped areas will also be developed further, to meet the recreational needs of individuals and families.

1.2.4 Achieving environmental sustainability

By preserving our environment and natural resources, we fulfill our Islamic, human and moral duties. Preservation is also our responsibility to future generations and essential to the quality of our daily lives. We will seek to safeguard our environment by increasing the efficiency of waste management, establishing comprehensive recycling projects, reducing all types of pollution and fighting desertification. We will also promote the optimal use of our water resources by reducing consumption and utilizing treated and renewable water. We will direct our efforts towards protecting and rehabilitating our beautiful beaches, natural reserves and islands, making them open to everyone. We will seek the participation of the private sector and government funds in these efforts.

Among our commitments: 'Daem': meaningful entertainment for citizens

We will increase the number and variety of cultural and entertainment activities with the aim of opening dedicated venues to showcase our citizens' myriad talents. We will also review our regulations to simplify the establishment and registration of amateur, social and cultural clubs. We will launch and provide the necessary financial support for 'Daem', a national program to enhance the quality of cultural activities and entertainment. The program will create a national network of clubs, encourage the exchange of knowledge and international experiences and promote better awareness of a wide range of hobbies and leisure activities.

By 2020, there will be more than 450 registered and professionally organized amateur clubs providing a variety of cultural activities and entertainment events. Among our goals by 2030: · To have three Saudi cities be recognized in the top-ranked 100 cities in the world · To increase household spending on cultural and entertainment activities inside the Kingdom from the current level of 2.9% to 6% · To increase the ratio of individuals exercising at least once a week from 13% of population to 40%

1.3 A vibrant society with strong foundations

Our goal is to promote and reinvigorate social development in order to build a strong and productive society. We will strengthen our families, provide the education that builds our children's fundamental characters and establish

empowering health and social care systems.

1.3.1 Caring for our families

Families are the key building block of a society, protecting it from social breakdown across generations, and acting as both its children's sanctuary and the main provider of their needs. One of the defining characteristics of the Kingdom is its adherence to Islamic principles and values, together with the unity and extended family relations. Building on these key characteristics, we will provide our families with all the necessary support to take care of their children and develop their talents and abilities.

In particular, we want to deepen the participation of parents in the education process, to help them develop their children's characters and talents so that they can contribute fully to society. Families will also be encouraged to adopt a planning culture, to plan carefully for their future and the futures of their children. We recognize each family's aspiration to own a home and the important role ownership plays in strengthening family security. Even though 47 percent of Saudi families already own their homes, we aim to increase this rate by five percentage points by 2020. This would be a substantial achievement given the high increase in the number of new entrants to the housing market. We will meet this target by introducing a number of laws and regulations; encouraging the private sector to build houses; and providing funding, mortgage solutions and ownership schemes that meet the needs of our citizens.

1.3.2 Developing our children's character

We intend to embed positive moral beliefs in our children's characters from an early age by reshaping our academic and educational system. Schools, working with families, will reinforce the fabric of society by providing students with the compassion, knowledge, and behaviors necessary for resilient and independent characters to emerge. The focus will be on the fundamental values of initiative, persistence and leadership, as well as social skills, cultural knowledge and self-awareness. We will also promote cultural, social, volunteering and athletic activities through empowering our educational, cultural and entertainment institutions.

1.3.3 Empowering our society

We will continue modernizing our social welfare system to make it more efficient, empowering and just. Subsidies for fuel, food, water and electricity will be better utilized by redirecting them towards those in need. We will provide our most vulnerable citizens with tailored care and support. Together with the private sector and non-governmental organizations, we will offer preparation and training to those unable to find employment so they can smoothly join the workforce whenever possible.

1.3.4 Caring for our health

Our health care system has benefited from substantive investment in recent decades. As a result, we now have 2.2 hospital beds for every 1,000 people,

world-class medical specialists with average life expectancy rising from 66 years to 74 years in the past three decades. We are determined to optimize and better utilize the capacity of our hospitals and health care centers, and enhance the quality of our preventive and therapeutic health care services. The public sector will focus on promoting preventive care, on reducing infectious diseases and in encouraging citizens to make use of primary care as a first step. It will deepen collaboration and integration between health and social care, as well as supporting families to provide home care when necessary for their relatives. The public sector will focus on its planning, regulatory and supervisory roles in health care. We intend to provide our health care through public corporations both to enhance its quality and to prepare for the benefits of privatization in the longer term. We will work towards developing private medical insurance to improve access to medical services and reduce waiting times for appointments with specialists and consultants. Our doctors will be given better training to improve treatment for chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer that threaten our nation's health.

Among our commitments: 'Irtiqaa': A more prominent role for families in the education of their children The engagement of parents in their children's education is one of the main principles of success. Our goal by 2020 is for 80 percent of parents to be engaged in school activities and the learning process of their children. We will launch the 'Irtiqaa' program, which will measure how effectively schools are engaging parents in their children's education. We will establish parent-led boards in schools, to open discussion forums and further engage with parents. Teachers will receive training to raise their awareness of the importance of communicating with parents and equip them with effective methods to do so successfully. We will also collaborate with private and non-profit sectors to offer innovative educational programs and events that can improve this academic partnership.

Among our commitments: Corporatization: efficient and high quality health care Our goal is to enhance the standard and quality of health care services. Our aim is a health care sector that promotes competition and transparency among providers. This will enhance the capability, efficiency and productivity of care and treatment and increase the options available to our citizens. To achieve this goal, we will introduce corporatization into the sector by transferring the responsibility for health care provision to a network of public companies that compete both against each other and against the private sector. This will provide our citizens with the highest quality of health care while, at the same time, allowing the government to focus on its legislative, regulatory and supervisory roles. Corporatization shall also promote and prioritize specialization in health care services and enable citizens to choose their preferred service provider.

Among our goals by 2030:· To raise our position from 26 to 10 in the Social Capital index. · To increase the average life expectancy from 74 years to 80 years

2 A Thriving Economy

2.1 A thriving economy, rewarding opportunities

The skills and competencies of our children are one of the most important and

cherished assets. To make the most of their potential, we will build a culture that rewards determination, provides opportunities for all and helps everyone acquire the necessary skills to achieve their personal goals. To this end, we will reinforce the ability of our economy to generate diverse job opportunities and institute a new paradigm in attracting global talents and qualifications.

2.1.1 Learning for working

We will continue investing in education and training so that our young men and women are equipped for the jobs of the future. We want Saudi children, wherever they live, to enjoy higher quality, multi-faceted education. We will invest particularly in developing early childhood education, refining our national curriculum and training our teachers and educational leaders. We will also redouble efforts to ensure that the outcomes of our education system are in line with market needs. We have launched the National Labor Gateway (TAQAT), and we plan to establish sector councils that will precisely determine the skills and knowledge required by each socio-economic sector. We will also expand vocational training in order to drive forward economic development. Our scholarship opportunities will be steered towards prestigious international universities and be awarded in the fields that serve our national priorities. We will also focus on innovation in advanced technologies and entrepreneurship.

2.1.2 Boosting our small businesses and productive families

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are among the most important agents of economic growth; they create jobs, support innovation and boost exports. SMEs in the Kingdom are not yet major contributors to our GDP, especially when compared to advanced economies. Therefore, we will strive to create suitable job opportunities for our citizens by supporting SME entrepreneurship, privatization and investments in new industries. To help us achieve this goal, we have established the SME Authority and we will continue encouraging our young entrepreneurs with business-friendly regulations, easier access to funding, international partnerships and a greater share of national procurement and government bids. Our productive families now enjoy vast marketing opportunities through social media and digital platforms. We will facilitate access to these channels, enable microfinance and motivate the non-profit sector to build the capabilities of our productive families and fund their initiatives.

2.1.3 Providing equal opportunities

Our economy will provide opportunities for everyone — men and women, young and old — so they may contribute to the best of their abilities. We will place a renewed emphasis on lifelong training and we will seek to make the most of the potential of our workforce by encouraging a culture of high performance. These efforts will be coordinated by the recently established Job Creation and Anti-Unemployment Commission. One of our most significant assets is our lively and vibrant youth. We will guarantee their skills are developed and properly deployed. While many other countries are concerned with aging populations, more than half of the Saudi population is below the age of 25 years. We will take advantage of this demographic dividend by harnessing our youth's energy and by

expanding entrepreneurship and enterprise opportunities.

Saudi women are yet another great asset. With over 50percent of our university graduates being female, we will continue to develop their talents, invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy.

We will also enable those of our people with disabilities to receive the education and job opportunities that will ensure their independence and integration as effective members of society. They will be provided with all the facilities and tools required to put them on the path to commercial success.

2.1.4 Attracting the talents we need

Achieving our desired rate of economic growth will require an environment that attracts the necessary skills and capabilities both from within the Kingdom and beyond our national borders. We will seek to improve living and working conditions for non-Saudis, by extending their ability to own real estate in certain areas, improving the quality of life, permitting the establishment of more private schools and adopting an effective and simple system for issuing visas and residence permits.

Our goal is to attract and retain the finest Saudi and foreign minds, and provide them with all they need. Their presence in the Kingdom will contribute to economic development and attract additional foreign investment.

Among our commitments: An education that contributes to economic growth

We will close the gap between the outputs of higher education and the requirements of the job market. We will also help our students make careful career decisions, while at the same time training them and facilitating their transition between different educational pathways. In the year 2030, we aim to have at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 universities in international rankings. We shall help our students achieve results above international averages in global education indicators.

To this end, we will prepare a modern curriculum focused on rigorous standards in literacy, numeracy, skills and character development. We will track progress and publish a sophisticated range of education outcomes, showing year-on-year improvements. We will work closely with the private sector to ensure higher education outcomes are in line with the requirements of the job market. We will invest in strategic partnerships with apprenticeship providers, new skills councils from industry, and large private companies. We will also work towards developing the job specifications of every education field. Furthermore, we will build a centralized student database tracking students from early childhood through to K-12 and beyond into tertiary education (higher and vocational) in order to improve education planning, monitoring, evaluation, and outcomes.

Among our commitments: A bigger role for small and medium-sized enterprises

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contribute only 20 percent of our GDP whereas, in advanced economies, this contribution can reach up to 70percent. Despite the efforts made to improve the business environment in the Kingdom, SMEs can still endure unnecessarily slow and complex legal and administrative procedures. They also struggle to attract the necessary skills, capabilities and funding with financial institutions providing no more than 5 percent of the overall funding – a far lower percentage than the global average. We will strive to facilitate enhanced access to funding and to encourage our financial institutions to allocate up to 20 percent of overall funding to SMEs by 2030.

The recently established SME Authority plans to review laws and regulations thoroughly, remove obstacles, facilitate access to funding, and enable youth and entrepreneurs to market their ideas and products. At the same time, we will establish additional new business incubators, specialized training institutions and venture capital funds. These will aid entrepreneurs in developing their skills and networks. We will also support SMEs in marketing and help export their products and services, by leveraging e- commerce and collaborating with international stakeholders.

Among our goals by 2030: To lower the rate of unemployment from 11.6% to 7%.· To increase SME contribution to GDP from 20% to 35%.· To increase women's participation in the workforce from 22% to 30%.

2.2 A thriving economy: Investing for the long-term

Diversifying our economy is vital for its sustainability. Although oil and gas are essential pillars of our economy, we have begun expanding our investments into additional sectors. We understand that there are complicated challenges ahead but we have long-term plans to overcome them. In the past 25 years, the Saudi economy has grown by an annual average rate of more than 4 percent, contributing to the creation of millions of new jobs. Although we are already among the 20 largest economies in the world, our ambitions are even greater. We aspire to have an even higher ranking by 2030, despite the headwinds of the global economic slowdown and the expected impact of our structural economic reforms. This requires us to invest in all our resources in order to diversify the economy, unleash the capabilities of our promising economic sectors and privatize some government services.

2.2.1 Maximizing our investment capabilities

The ongoing privatization of state-owned assets, including leading companies, property and other assets, will bring in new and more diverse revenues for the Saudi government. This will further enhance our financial resources and economic stability, which will be reinvested for long-term impact. We will develop further the sophistication of our investment vehicles, particularly after transferring the ownership of Aramco to the Public Investment Fund, which will become the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world. We will increase the efficiency of the fund's management and improve its return on investment, with the aim of diversifying our government resources and our economy.

The Public Investment Fund will not compete with the private sector, but instead help unlock strategic sectors requiring intensive capital inputs. This will contribute towards developing entirely new economic sectors and establishing durable national corporations. Building on the Kingdom's leading position and historic alliances, we plan to enter long-term partnerships with neighboring and friendly countries for knowledge transfer and trade.

Our Vision is to maximize our investment capabilities by participating in large international companies and emerging technologies from around the world. This will ensure that we become market makers in selected sectors, as well as a leader in competitively managing assets, funding and investment. All of this will require the formation of an advanced financial and capital market open to the world, allowing greater funding opportunities and stimulating economic growth. To this end, we will continue facilitating access to investing and trading in the stock markets. We will smooth the process of listing private Saudi companies and state-owned enterprises, including Aramco. This will require deepening liquidity in our capital markets, fortifying the role of the debt market and paving the way for the derivatives market.

2.2.2 Launching our promising sectors

We will support promising sectors and foster their success so that they become new pillars of our economy. In the manufacturing sector, we will work towards localizing renewable energy and industrial equipment sectors. In the tourism and leisure sectors, we will create attractions that are of the highest international standards, improve visa issuance procedures for visitors, and prepare and develop our historical and heritage sites. In technology, we will increase our investments in, and lead, the digital economy. In mining, we will furnish incentives for and benefit from the exploration of the Kingdom's mineral resources. At the same time as diversifying our economy, we will continue to localize the oil and gas sector. As well as creating a new city dedicated to energy, we will double our gas production, and construct a national gas distribution network. We will also make use of our global leadership and expertise in oil and petrochemicals to invest in the development of adjacent and supporting sectors.

2.2.3 Privatizing our government services

Although we believe strongly in the important role of the private sector, it currently contributes less than 40 percent of GDP. To increase its long-term contribution to our economy, we will open up new investment opportunities, facilitate investment, encourage innovation and competition and remove all obstacles preventing the private sector from playing a larger role in development. We will continue to improve and reform our regulations, paving the way for investors and the private sector to acquire and deliver services – such as health care and education – that are currently provided by the public sector. We will seek to shift the government's role from providing services to one that focuses on regulating and monitoring them and we will build the capability to monitor this transition. We will seek to increase private sector contribution by encouraging investments, both local and international, in healthcare, municipal services, housing, finance, energy and so forth.

Among our commitments: Localize defense industries

The benefits of localizing our own defense industries are not limited to solely reducing military spending. It also stimulates other industrial sectors such as industrial equipment, communications and information technology, which in turn creates more job opportunities. Although the Kingdom is the world's third biggest military spender, only 2 percent of this spending is within our Kingdom. The national defense industrial sector is limited to only seven companies and two research centers.

Our aim is to localize over 50 percent of military equipment spending by 2030. We have already begun developing less complex industries such as those providing spare parts, armored vehicles and basic ammunition. We will expand this initiative to higher value and more complex equipment such as military aircraft. We will build an integrated national network of services and supporting industries that will improve our self-sufficiency and strengthen our defense exports, both regionally and internationally.

Localization will be achieved through direct investments and strategic partnerships with leading companies in this sector. These moves will transfer knowledge and technology, and build national expertise in the fields of manufacturing, maintenance, repair, research and development. We will also train our employees and establish more specialized and integrated industrial complexes.

Among our commitments: A mining sector contributing to the national economy at full potential.

We have been blessed with rich mineral resources such as aluminum, phosphate, gold, copper, uranium and other raw materials. Although the mining sector has already undergone improvements to cater to the needs of our industries, its contribution to GDP has yet to meet expectations. As such, we are determined to ensure it reaches SR 97 billion by 2020, creating 90,000 job opportunities in the process.

We are planning a number of structural reforms, which include stimulating private sector investments by intensifying exploration, building a comprehensive database of the Kingdom's resources, reviewing the licensing procedures for extraction, investing in infrastructure, developing funding methods and establishing centers of excellence. We will also form strategic international partnerships and raise the competitiveness and productivity of our national companies. This will boost their contribution to the sector's growth, as well as to the localization of knowledge and expertise.

Among our commitments: A renewable energy market

 Even though we have an impressive natural potential for solar and wind power, and our local energy consumption will increase three fold by 2030, we still lack a competitive renewable energy sector at present. To build up the sector, we have set ourselves an initial target of generating 9.5 gig watts of renewable energy.

We will also seek to localize a significant portion of the renewable energy value

chain in the Saudi economy, including research and development, and manufacturing, among other stages.

From inputs such as silica and petrochemicals, to the extensive expertise of our leading Saudi companies in the production of different forms of energy, we have all the raw ingredients for success. We will put this into practice with the forthcoming launch of the King Salman Renewable Energy Initiative. We will review the legal and regulatory framework that allows the private sector to buy and invest in the renewable energy sector. To localize the industry and produce the necessary skill-sets, we will also encourage public-private partnerships. Finally, we will guarantee the competitiveness of renewable energy through the gradual liberalization of the fuels market.

Among our goals by 2030: To move from our current position as the 19th largest economy in the world into the top 15. · To increase the localization of oil and gas sectors from 40% to 75% · To increase the Public Investment Fund's assets, from SAR 600 billion to over 7 trillion.

2.3 A thriving economy open for business

Opening Saudi Arabia further for business will boost productivity and smooth our journey to become one of the largest economies in the world. We will improve our business environment, restructure our economic cities, create special zones and deregulate the energy market to make it more competitive.

2.3.1 Improving the business environment
We will further pursue public-private partnerships, continue to facilitate the flow of private investment and improve our competitiveness. We will develop the necessary capabilities to increase the quality and reliability of our services. We will coordinate with legislative authorities to review current regulations with the aim of improving the business environment and enforcing contracts.

Where it exists in strategic locations, we will also capitalize on the government's reserves of real estate. We will allocate prime areas within cities for educational institutions, retail and entertainment centers, large areas along our coasts will be dedicated to tourist projects and appropriate lands will be allocated for industrial projects. We will enable banks and other financial institutions to adapt their financial products and services to the needs of each sector, ranging from large project capital funding to short-term working capital for small businesses. We will also facilitate and expedite licensing procedures based on our national economic priorities.

We will apply international legal and commercial regulations strictly and create a business environment conducive to long-term investment.

We will strive to facilitate the movement of people and goods, and to simplify customs procedures at our ports.

As a result, we will create an environment attractive to both local and foreign investors, and earn their confidence in the resilience and potential of our national economy.

2.3.2 Rehabilitating economic cities

We are aware that the economic cities of the last decade did not realize their potential. Work has halted in several cities, and others face challenges that threaten their viability. We have worked in cooperation with Aramco to restructure Jazan Economic City. We will strive to salvage other economic cities, especially those with comparative advantages. To achieve this, we will work with the companies owning those cities to revamp them and transfer vital facilities. This effort will depend on the readiness of these companies to work with the government. Our aim is for these cities to contribute in the development of the economy and to attract quality investments as well as local and international talent, all kept in line with our national priorities.

2.3.3 Establishing special zones

We will create special zones in exceptional and competitive locations. We shall take into account the comparative advantages of the Kingdom's different regions, assess their feasibility for promising sectors, and then establish special zones, such as logistic, tourist, industrial and financial ones. Special commercial regulations to boost investment possibilities and diversify government revenues will be applied to these zones.

2.3.4 Increasing the competitiveness of our energy sector

We plan to raise the efficiency of the government's support system and make the best use of its benefits by redirecting it and targeting eligible citizens and economic sectors. For example, we understand that providing subsidies with no clear eligibility criteria is a substantial obstacle to the energy sector's competitiveness. Free market prices shall, in the long term, stimulate productivity and competitiveness among utility companies and open the door to investment and diversification of the energy mix in the Kingdom. We will also seek to set clear subsidy criteria based on the maturity of economic sectors, their ability to compete locally and internationally and their actual need for subsidies, without endangering promising and strategic sectors.

Among our commitments: A restructured King Abdullah Financial District

In the last decade, works started at the King Abdullah Financial District, without consideration of its economic feasibility. The objective was to prepare the land in order to allow the business and financial communities to invest and build real estate. When this objective was not reached, the government decided back then to develop and rent the real estate.

Challenges were deepened by the development of the real estate project in one single phase, which caused a significant increase in construction costs and several delays in delivery. This resulted in large oversupply of commercial space for the years to come. Without any dramatic shift in direction, renting the three million square meters of built-up areas at reasonable prices, or even achieving decent occupancy rates, will be very challenging. With this in mind, we have reviewed the economic feasibility of and designed a new fundamental strategy for the district in order to increase the chances of profitability and success. We will seek

to transform the district into a special zone that has competitive regulations and procedures, with visa exemptions, and directly connected to the King Khaled International Airport. We will also seek to repurpose some of the built-up areas and change the real estate mix, increasing the allocation for residential accommodation, services and hospitality areas. We will seek to build and create an integrated and attractive living and working environment. The district will be the headquarters of the Public Investment Fund, the largest sovereign wealth fund, which will contribute to creating an environment attractive to financial, investment and other corporations.

Among our commitments: A flourishing retail sector

Over the past decade, the retail sector achieved an annual growth rate in excess of 10 percent. It currently employs 1.5 million workers, of which only 0.3 million are Saudis. Traditional retail also still dominates 50 percent of the market in the Kingdom compared to 20 percent in a number of countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with our retail market suffering from limited penetration of modern trade and e-commerce. We aim to provide job opportunities for an additional million Saudis by 2020 in a growing retail sector that attracts modern, local, regional, and international brands across all regions of the country. We also aim to increase the contribution of modern trade and e-commerce to 80 percent of the retail sector by 2020. This will be achieved by attracting both regional and international retail investors and by easing restrictions on ownership and foreign investment.

To this end, we will facilitate local and regional flow of goods and develop necessary sectoral regulations. We will also increase financing of small retail enterprises to stimulate their growth and development.

Among our commitments: A developed digital infrastructure A sophisticated digital infrastructure is integral to today's advanced industrial activities. It attracts investors and enhances the fundamental competitiveness of the Saudi economy.

We will partner with the private sector to develop the telecommunications and information technology infrastructure, especially high-speed broadband, expanding its coverage and capacity within and around cities and improving its quality. Our specific goal is to exceed 90 percent housing coverage in densely populated cities and 66 percent in other urban zones. We will also develop building standards to facilitate the extension of broadband networks.

We will strengthen the governance of digital transformation through a national council. Additionally, we will improve our regulations and establish an effective partnership with telecom operators to better develop this critical infrastructure. We will also support local investments in the telecommunications and information technology sectors.

Among our goals by 2030: ·

To rise from our current position of 25 to the top 10 countries on the Global Competitiveness Index To increase foreign direct investment from 3.8% to

the international level of 5.7% of GDP. To increase the private sector's contribution from 40% to 65% of GDP.

2.4 A thriving economy leveraging its unique position

Saudi Arabia is right at the crossroads of important international trade routes, between three continents: Asia, Europe and Africa. We will therefore maximize the benefits from our exceptional and strategic geographic position, agree new strategic partnerships to grow our economy and help Saudi companies to increase exports of their products. We will leverage the close proximity of energy sources and our distinctive logistical offer to stimulate a new phase of industrialization and to catalyze exports and re- exports.

2.4.1 Building a unique regional logistical hub

We have already invested heavily in the construction of ports, railways, roads and airports. To take full advantage of these investments, we plan to work with the private sector and enter into a new series of international partnerships to complete, improve and link our infrastructure internally and across borders. We will also unlock our 'hard' infrastructure with systems that can drive higher performance, including more rigorous governance, leaner processes and a more efficient customs system. We will improve and implement existing laws and regulations. Air, maritime, and other transport operators will be encouraged to make the most of their capacity: achieving durable links between existing trade hubs, as well as opening new trade routes. This will reinforce our position as a distinctive logistical gateway to the three continents.

2.4.2 Integrating regionally and internationally

With a GDP of SAR 2.4 trillion, our economy is already the largest in the Middle East. We enjoy close economic ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council and other Arab countries, as well as constructive relations with Islamic and foreign countries. We will seek to establish new business partnerships and facilitate a smoother flow of goods, people and capital.

Among our top priorities is to fortify and extend our interconnectivity and economic integration with other Gulf Cooperation Council countries. We will strive to complete the process of implementing the GCC common market, unifying customs, economic and legal policies, and constructing shared road and railway networks.

We will seek to effectively link with other countries in the region, through enhanced logistics services and new cross-border infrastructure projects, including land transport projects with Africa through Egypt. Logistical and trade exchanges will be streamlined, further cementing our pre-eminent position as a major trade hub.

2.4.3 Supporting our national companies

Rather than competing generically across the board, we will concentrate on our comparative advantages, national strengths and the areas that will assure

leadership status. Initially, our priority will be to fully support major national companies, which have already gained a leading market share, by promoting their products and services regionally and globally, especially in the fields of oil, petrochemicals, banking, telecommunications, food, health care, and retail. We will also seek to support Saudi companies with promising growth opportunities so they develop into new regional and global leaders. Finally, we will fully support our national industries, assisting them to market themselves abroad and to export their products.

Among our goals by 2030: To raise our global ranking in the Logistics Performance Index from 49 to 25 and ensure the Kingdom is a regional leader To raise the share of non-oil exports in non-oil GDP from 16% to 50%

3. Embracing transparency

We shall have zero tolerance for all levels of corruption, whether administrative or financial. We will adopt leading international standards and administrative practices, helping us reach the highest levels of transparency and governance in all sectors. We will set and uphold high standards of accountability. Our goals, plans and performance indicators will be published so that progress and delivery can be publicly monitored.

Transparency will be boosted and delays reduced by expanding online services and improving their governance standards, with the aim of becoming a global leader in e-government.

3.1. Protecting our vital resources

We will continue to build safe and sufficient strategic food reserves, to better guard against emergencies. Aquaculture will be promoted, as will strategic partnerships with countries blessed with natural resources such as fertile soil and water reserves. In Saudi Arabia, the use of water in agriculture will be prioritized for those areas with natural and renewable water sources. We will also continue to collaborate with consumers, food manufacturers and distributors to reduce any resource wastage.

3.1.1 Engaging everyone

We will deepen communication channels between government agencies on one hand and citizens and the private sector on the other. We shall facilitate interactive, online and smart engagement methods and ways to listen to citizens' views, and to hear all insights and perspectives. We will encourage government agencies to improve the quality of their services, and to meet the needs of every citizen. We want to give everyone the opportunity to have their say so that the government can serve them better and meet their aspirations.

3.1.2 Committing to efficient spending and balanced finances

Our commitment is clear: There will be no taxes on citizens' income or wealth, nor on basic goods. We shall prudently and efficiently balance our budget, as well

as diversify and maximize our revenue sources. Our goal is to keep prices stable over the long term, and give Saudi citizens greater economic security.

In the public sector, we will seek to eliminate waste and continue to make spending more efficient. This will be achieved through stricter spending controls, focusing on high impact projects, aligning strategic priorities to budget, rigorous auditing and putting in place tough accountability mechanisms. We have reviewed all our existing and approved projects to ensure that they will have a sufficiently positive impact on the nation and our economy. We have taken the necessary measures to halt projects that fail to show potential impact and meet predefined standards. We will plan also for better management of our talented civil service, and provide shared services within our government according to best practices.

We will work to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Public Investment Fund, so that its proceeds can become a new and sustainable public revenue stream. Non-oil revenues will increase as logistical and trade flows increase, and as we grow a more diversified and balanced Saudi economy. We will continue to manage effectively oil production to ensure a rewarding flow of oil revenue and reinvestment. We will revamp government license and service fees and develop the appropriate collection tools. Finally, we will seek to offer, at appropriate fees, a number of new services in select sectors, such as municipal, transport and labor sectors.

3.1.3 Organizing ourselves with agility

By eliminating supreme councils in the Kingdom and establishing the Council of Political and Security Affairs and the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, we have increased our effectiveness, efficiency and the speed of decision-making. We will continue in this policy direction, to deliver this Vision for Saudi Arabia. This will result in effective governance and better business continuity within each ministry.

We will carefully examine our government structures and procedures, roles, responsibilities and capabilities. Our ambition is a more joined-up government, with clearer links between policy decisions, delivery, and performance monitoring. We will take an evidence-based approach, just as we will with preventing financial and administrative waste. We will continue to develop monitoring units and help them with recruitment, budgets and other organizational support, to make sure that Saudi services are performing well in accordance with global best practices. These units will push for coordination between government agencies and other relevant bodies, as well as help them monitor and improve their performance. Among our commitments: The King Salman Program for Human Capital Development. We have yet to identify and put into effect the best practices that would ensure that public sector employees have the right skills for the future.

However, by 2020, we aim to have trained, through distance learning, 500,000 government employees. All ministries and government institutions will be required to adopt best practices in human capital development. We will continue to hire individuals according to merit and work towards building a broad talent

base, so they may become leaders of the future.

The King Salman Program for Human Capital Development will establish HR centers of excellence in every government agency, and provide training. We will work to raise the productivity of employees to the highest levels possible, by implementing proper performance management standards, providing continuous training for professional development, and sharing knowledge. We will develop targeted policies to identify and empower future leaders, and will furnish a stimulating environment that provides equal opportunities and rewards for excellence. Among our commitments: Shared services to our government agencies

We are working towards shared services across our government agencies. This will contribute to achieving our goal of increasing productivity and raising the efficiency of government spending. Shared services in our government will also aim to increase quality, cut costs, unify our efforts, and provide a suitable work environment for all parties at the lowest cost.

Shared services can be applied globally and locally in many sectors. This is our long-term goal, and we will implement it gradually. As a first step therefore, we will examine the status of support services in government sectors, set the scope of work and develop comprehensive priorities and implementation plans. We will follow best practices in employing shared services, with a robust set of performance indicators that will measure quality, workflow improvement, cost reduction and knowledge transfer.

Among our commitments: 'Qawam': increasing spending efficiency

We are committed to making our public spending radically more efficient, using our resources more effectively, and limiting waste. We will launch the 'Qawam' program as a reflection of the Qur'anic verse that calls for moderation in spending between excess and parsimony. Allah the Almighty says: 'And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but hold a medium (way) between those (extremes)'

Through this program, we will comprehensively review financial regulations in all government agencies. The program is intended to move away from a narrow reliance on process auditing, and move towards a more integrated approach with effective and efficient spending controls, and specific and measurable goals, while sustaining resources and assets. We will raise awareness and reward a culture of efficient spending throughout all administrative levels. Specialized training for employees and other key stakeholders will be provided as required, boosting the performance of finance departments and internal auditing.

Among our commitments: Effective e-government

We have made remarkable progress in e-government. The scope of online services has already been expanded over the last decade to include employment programs, online job searches, e-learning services, traffic, passports and civil affairs, online payment services, online issuance of commercial registers, among others. This has improved Saudi Arabia's ranking on several global indicators. In

the UN e-Government Index, for instance, we ranked 36 in 2014, up from 90 in 2004.

We will expand the scope of current online services further to include areas such as geographic information, health care and education. Quality will be improved by streamlining processes, and diversifying communication channels. We will also support the wider use of online applications in government agencies, such as cloud applications, data sharing platforms and HR management systems. Finally, we will strengthen the governance of online services within the government itself.

Among our goals by 2030:

To increase non-oil government revenue from SR163 billion to SR1 Trillion. · To raise our ranking in the Government Effectiveness Index, from 80 to 20. · To raise our ranking on the E-Government Survey Index from our current position of 36 to be among the top five nations.

3.2 An Ambitious nation, responsibly enabled

The nation we aspire to build will not be realized without a grand, collective national effort where everyone contributes. We all have roles to fulfill, whether we are working in the public, private or non- profit sectors. We will therefore work continually to achieve our hopes and fulfil our aspirations and responsibilities to our country, our society, our families, and to ourselves.

3.2.1 Being responsible for our lives

We have already faced and overcome many challenges and accomplished much, by the grace of Allah and our brotherhood. We have contributed to building our country. We have been, and still are, a great example in assuming responsibility. Today, as we face fresh challenges, new roles and responsibilities are required. We should feel great confidence in our capabilities, in our understanding of our obligations and in our ability to achieve excellence for our nation, our society, our families and ourselves.

We are each personally responsible for our own futures. As such, we will develop ourselves and will work to become independent and active members of society, developing new skills in the process. We will remember our lifelong obligations to our families. In the workplace, we will be committed and disciplined, acquire new experience and pursue our ambitions.

We will create the right environment to enable us to fulfill these responsibilities. We will promote greater financial independence by providing planning tools such as mortgages, savings portfolios, and retirement options. We will set up a regulatory framework that empowers the non-profit sector.

3.2.2 Being responsible in business

We aspire to have businesses that contribute to developing our society and our country, not be geared solely towards generating profits. We expect our

companies to observe their social responsibilities and contribute to creating a sustainable economy, including by creating the stimulating opportunities for young men and women that can help them build their professional careers. We will encourage the businesses that follow through on this commitment to participate in our country and to address national challenges.

3.2.3 Being responsible to society

The values of giving, compassion, cooperation and empathy are firmly entrenched in our society. We have already played an influential role in providing social aid locally, regionally and globally. In the future, we will formalize and strengthen the organization of our social and compassionate work so that our efforts have the maximum results and impact.

Today, we have fewer than 1,000 non-profit foundations and associations. In order to increase the resilience and impact of this sector, we will continue to develop regulations necessary to empower non- profit organizations. We will review our regulations to encourage endowments to sustainably fund the sector and to encourage corporations and high net worth families to establish non-profit organizations. Government support will be directed to the programs with highest social impact and we will support training workers to encourage volunteering and careers in the non-profit sector. Enabling non-profit organizations to attract the best talents in order to ensure best management practices and the transfer of knowledge, which will strengthen these institutions over the long-term. This will ensure that the non-profit sector plays an enhanced and more efficient role in critical sectors such as health care, education, housing, research, and cultural and social programs.

Among our commitments: A more impactful non-profit sector

Today, we have fewer than 1,000 non-profit and charitable foundations and associations. They contribute just 0.3 percent of our GDP, much less than the global average of 6 percent. Currently, just 7 percent of projects are focused on generating social impact or are aligned with the long-term national priorities. By 2020, more than one third of our non-profit organizations' projects should have measurable and deep social impact.

The recently published regulations on non-profit organizations and on the General Authority for Endowments will help the non-profit sector become more institutionalized, formalized and more efficient. We will accelerate this shift further by supporting projects and programs with high social impact and by facilitating the establishment of non-profit organizations by high net worth families, which will promote rapid growth of the non-profit sector. We will support this growth by creating a supportive and cooperate environment in which the sector's institutions and government agencies can collaborate.

At the same time, we will encourage the non-profit sector to apply proper governance standards, facilitate high quality training to staff and promote a culture of volunteering and full-time careers in the sector.

Among our goals by 2030: -To increase household savings from 6% to 10%

of total household income · To raise the non-profit sector's contribution to GDP from less than 1% to 5% · To rally one million volunteers per year (compared to 11,000 now)

How to achieve our Vision

We have outlined a comprehensive and ambitious Vision for Saudi Arabia until the year 2030. It is the first step on our journey towards a better, brighter future for our country and our citizens. To achieve our aspirations and hopes, we have already launched many transformative programs that have paved the way for the Vision and will help us achieve our goals. These include, but are not limited to the following:

The Government Restructuring program: Around the world, governments are organizing themselves with agility, continuously restructuring and aligning their systems to national priorities. We have already started moving along this path by eliminating supreme councils and establishing the Council of Political and Security Affairs and the Council of Economic and Development Affairs. These reforms have helped to speed strategy development and decision-making, as well as enhance performance. We will continue this careful restructuring, comprehensively and gradually, based on our clear priorities.

The Strategic Directions program: We have approved the strategic directions determined by our government agencies. Existing roles have been reviewed to align with our future economic and social needs. Decisions are based on detailed studies and benchmarks, as well as comprehensive analysis of each agency's programs, plans and relevant performance indicators.

The Fiscal Balance program: After the Council of Economic and Development Affairs was established, we began examining our existing capital expenditures, their approval mechanism and their measureable economic impact. We have formed committees and introduced new departments tasked with reviewing relevant regulations and taking the necessary action on the expenditures. As a consequence, last year, we increased our non-oil revenues by 30 percent, and we planto continue diversifying our non-oil revenues in the coming years, by introducing new measures.

The Project Management program: The Kingdom's agencies are currently undergoing a wave of reforms and transformation. To manage this momentum and ensure all efforts are coordinated, we adopted an effective approach to project management and established expert project management offices (PMOs) in the Council of Economic and Development Affairs and many other government agencies. We also set up a central Delivery Unit.

The Regulations Review program: Over the past year, we reviewed many current laws and enacted new laws that have been years overdue. These include the company law, the non-governmental organizations' law, the law concerning fees on non-used lands, the General Authority for Endowments (Awqaf) law, among others. We will continue to review all laws to ensure they are in line with the Kingdom's priorities.

The Performance Measurement program: We adopted the principle of performance measurement, and made sure it is properly used in our evaluation of all government agencies, their programs, initiatives and executives. We established the Center for Performance Management of Government Agencies to institutionalize these efforts for the long-term and built performance dashboards to promote accountability and transparency.

Executive programs

To ensure the realization of Saudi Arabia's Vision for 2030, we are preparing to launch a group of executive programs that will have a significant impact on implementation. These include, but are not limited to the following:

The Saudi Aramco Strategic Transformation program: We believe that Saudi Aramco has the ability to lead the world in other sectors besides oil, and it has worked on a sweeping transformative program that will position it as a leader in more than one sector.

The Public Investment Fund Restructuring program: Having worked on restructuring the fund, we are now refining its investment capabilities and enabling the fund to manage a broader portfolio of current and new assets. We aim to transform it into the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world and will announce a comprehensive plan to achieve this goal.

The Human Capital program: Because human capital is a crucial factor in the success of any substantial project, we aim to launch a thorough program for nurturing our human talent. This program will measure, assess and analyze the efficiency of our civil service. It will also support our government agencies with staff, studies, consultations, and strategic partnerships related to human capital.

The National Transformation program: In a new approach, our government agencies have been working through numerous workshops to examine their role in implementing the initiatives necessary for delivering on national priorities. We are identifying opportunities for partnering with the private sector, as well as innovative administrative and funding approaches. We are detailing specific initiatives that have clear performance indicators.

The Strategic Partnerships program: We are working with our economic partners around the world to build new strategic partnerships for the twenty-first century, in harmony with our national Vision, so that we can be a trade hub connecting three continents and enhance our exports.

The Privatization program: We are in the process of determining additional sectors suitable for privatization. Our goal is to create a comprehensive privatization program. We will make use of international best practices, transfer knowledge and achieve our goals in a balanced and scientific manner.

The program for Strengthening Public Sector Governance: We will work on restructuring our government agencies continuously and with flexibility. We will eliminate redundant roles, unify efforts, streamline procedures and define responsibilities. We shall also enable our agencies to deliver on their mandate, to

be accountable, to ensure business continuity and to show adaptability in the face of new challenges. Under the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, we will establish a strategic management office to focus on coordinating all government programs and ensuring their careful alignment with the national Vision. The office will also prevent gaps, duplication or contradiction between agencies' policies and programs, and ensure that all components of the Vision are detailed in proper sectoral strategies. We will also establish a Decision Support Center at the Royal Court to support decision-making through analytical and evidence-based information and reports.

Our commitment to achieving the goals of these pivotal programs and our collective contribution shall be the first step towards achieving Saudi Arabia's Vision for 2030. We will continue to launch new programs in the upcoming years as required, and we will continuously review and assess our performance in achieving this Vision. May Allah bless us and guide us to the right path.

Saudi Vision 2030

http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2016/04/26/Full-text-of-Saudi-Arabia-s-Vision-2030.html